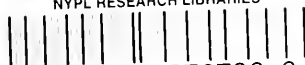


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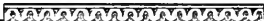


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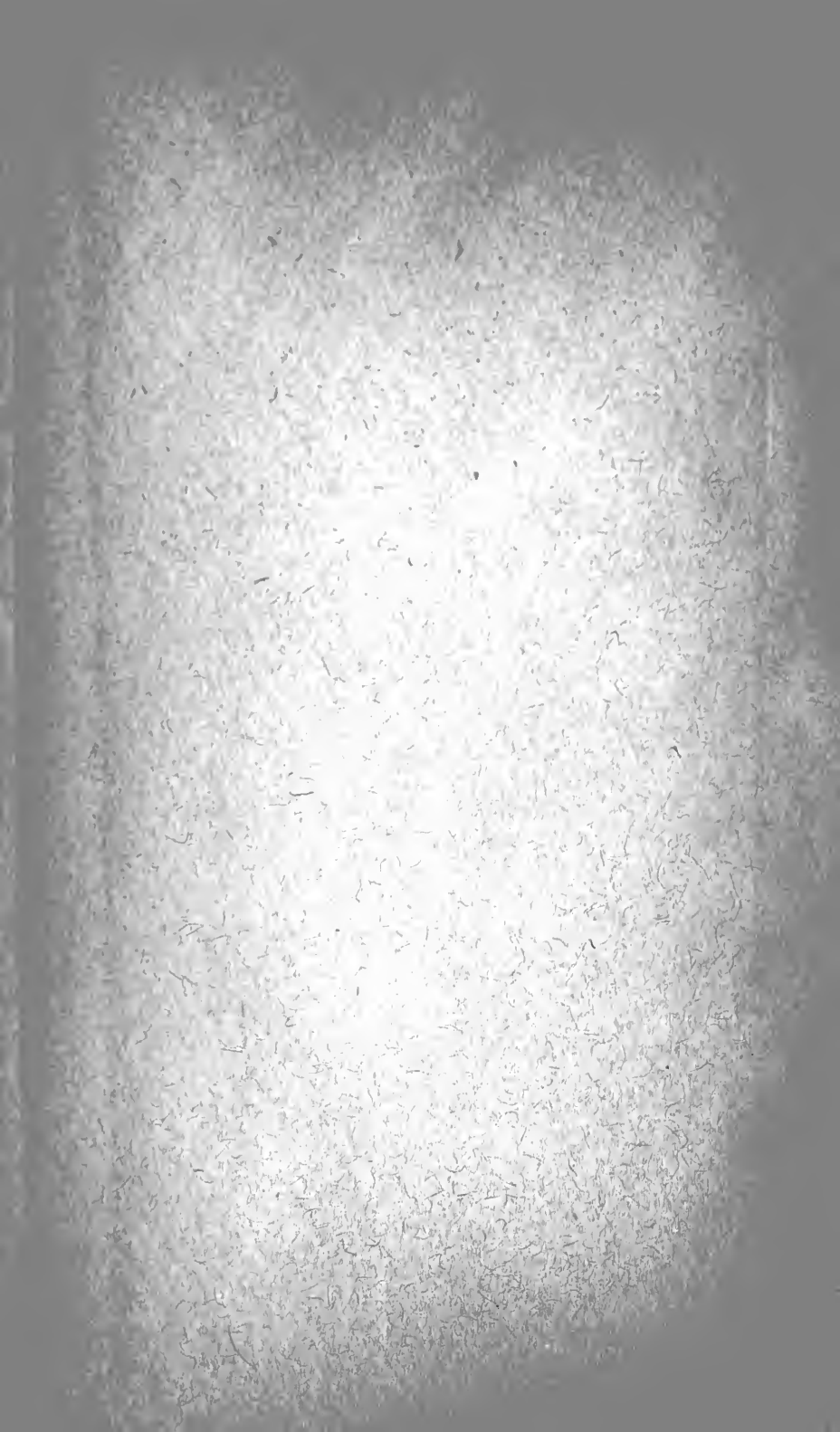
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FIVE HUNDRED MAJORITY:

OR,

THE DAYS OF TAMMANY.

BY

WILLYS NILES, pseud of
Hume, John Ferguson, 1830-



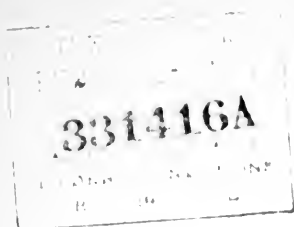
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FIVE HUNDRED MAJORITY.

BOOK FIRST.

CHAPTER I.

THE BOY IN TROUBLE.

"I KNOWED the boy would git into trouble!"

"Then what on arth did you lit him go fur?"

"He was not my servant—not even my son."

"But he wus of your raisin, ginerly speakin."

"Now, Polly, you understand human nater well enough, fur you wus young once, though you're no ducklin now—there, don't frown so—to know that young folks is not always to be guided by old folks. There wus your younger and purtier sister Lizzie ——"

"There you go, Mr. Swartwout, at my sex agin. I don't care if Lizzie did run away; it wus Tom Boden's fault altogether. If he had'nt run away with her—and he wus a man—she'd never a-thought of such a thing."

"I'm not raisin that pint now, Polly, though I do think your sex

has the most to answer fur. There wus Eve, you know, to begin with. It's of age, not sex, I'm speakin. Young heads always think they hold more than old ones. That wus Clinton's weakness. He wus a good boy, and a lovin boy; and he had a head that wus the makin of the smartest kind of a man; but he got that notion of goin to headquarters, as he called New York, into it, and all I could say and do, I couldn't drive it out."

"That's all true enough, Mr. Swartwout; but yit I can't help a-thinkin it wus mainly your fault. What wus it put that notion of goin to York into the boy, but your way of flatterin him, an' tellin him he had a head above the common? No wonder he come to think no place outside of York was grand enough fur him."

"Now, Polly, do have some sense. As fur flatterin the boy, I should like to know who wus always pickin out wives fur him—tellin him that he could marry this one and that one, and makin believe that nobody wus

too good fur him. If there's any one thing that's calculated to turn a boy's head, it's a-thinkin all the girls is in love with him. That shoe, I rather think, fits your foot."

"I'm not a-goin to deny my share of the 'sponsibility, Mr. Swartwout, fur we all have our sins to answer fur, and I did love Clinton. But what I say is, that you're the one that's most to blame, bein a man——"

"There it is agin. The men is always to blame. Adam beguiled Eve, and Tom Boden, though, ginerly speakin, he hadn't no more spunk than a sheep, ran away with your sister Lizzie. Weemen is always very innocent when the mischief's done. No, Polly, I wusn't to blame fur Clinton Muintland's goin to New York. I warned him agin it—told him there wus more'n enough people there already—that a good share of them, men and weemen, wusn't fit fur no young man of good morals to sociate with, and that I knowed if he went he'd git into trouble. The responsibility, apart from what the boy himself must bear, rests somewhere else. Who wus it that wus a-makin shirts, and knittin socks, and gittin him ready to have his own way, spite of me, when I was arguin and fightin the battle with the youngster? Answer me that, will you!"

Wa'al, you wouldn't a-had the boy go naked, would you?—and I so loved Clinton, too. Oh, Mr. Swartwout, I thought you had a heart!"

Here the woman addressed as Polly took refuge in that fortress which is always her sex's surest resource when worsted in the field of

argument. She began to snivel, at the same time covering her face in retreat with that shield which woman rarely fails to have at command—her apron.

From the tenor and temper of so much of the colloquy as has been given, the all but irresistible inference would be, that the parties to it were husband and wife. Such was not the case. They were not even, as the expression is, so much as "related" to each other. They were——but to properly explain requires a formal introduction to two persons with whom the reader might as well at once be made acquainted.

Martin Swartwout was a bachelor—an old bachelor, for he was hard on fifty—"comfortable," as the world esteems any man who has enough property to make him respected by his neighbors and flattered by his probable heirs—otherwise a plain and simple-hearted, but thrifty, farmer in a Central New York town. Polly Brown was a maid—an old maid, for she was nearly as venerable as her companion in the foregoing dialogue—and, moreover, Martin Swartwout's housekeeper. She, too, was financially very "well off," having always carefully husbanded—which she had failed to do for herself—the wages she had received, beyond what was absolutely indispensable expenditure, and was, notwithstanding, considerably run to angles and wrinkles at the date of her introduction to the reader, a well-preserved representative of her sex and years. The explanation of the freedom of speech she took with her employer was that, having been in

orphaned childhood adopted and "raised" by Martin Swartwout's mother, she had virtually grown up and lived as one of the family. The relation between the two people was practically that of brother and sister. They might as well have been married, seeing how they lived, was a common remark in the neighborhood, although even the censorious world attributed no impropriety to their association; but Martin Swartwout and Polly Brown had always thought otherwise. Perhaps it was because each had a tongue, and, as the reader has had the opportunity of seeing, knew how to use it. They had their disagreements like other people, and Martin Swartwout—in reply to a delicate suggestion from the Rev. Mr. Goodbody, to whose flock they belonged, and who enjoyed the reputation of being something of a match-maker, that they would do well to become one through his instrumentality—did say, that they differed quite enough as it was, without being brought any closer together. The truth is, they led something of a cat and dog existence—the man, who was the best natured creature in the world, although given to waggery and harmless teasing, being the big, playful mastiff, full of mischief without malice; and the woman, who was like some others of her sex that have passed beyond the boundary of the uncertain, his feline antipode, ever ready to do battle with tooth and claw.

When his adversary began to cry, raising her apron to her face as a signal of distress, Martin Swartwout was disarmed; for, notwithstanding

the woman's very natural accusation, he did, as has already been alleged, have a heart.

"Wa'al, wa'al," said he, in a conciliatory tone, "I wus only jokin. There, don't mind it."

"It's too solemn an occasion fur jokin," dolefully responded his companion. "Clinton in trouble, and you goin away to that—that dreadful York. Oh, dear! Oh, dear!"

What had before been a snivel now broke forth into a downright shower of tears, making the man still more anxious to allay the tempest he had raised.

"Perhaps it's not so bad after all," he said, soothingly. "Clinton says he hasn't been doin nothin wrong; and if so, they can't surely hurt him. He says——"

Here the old gentleman began to fumble about his pockets for the authoritative evidence of what Clinton did say, the search resulting in the production of a letter, which, upon being opened and read, proved to be the following:

NEW YORK, November 27th, 18—

DEAR UNCLE MARTIN: I am in serious trouble—you will understand how serious, when I inform you that I am in the Tombs—the principal prison here—on a charge of murder. I will not enter upon the particulars now, as I write at present merely in fulfillment of my promise to you, to let you know immediately in case any serious trouble came upon me. I need hardly add to you, who know me so well, that I am wholly innocent of any crime.

Your loving nephew,
CLINTON MAINTLAND.

"There, you see, he says he hasn't done nothin wrong, and Clinton's one to be believed."

"Of course he's to be believed."

"Then they can't surely do anything to him."

"I dono. It's a dreadful, dreadful place—York is."

And at this reflection the lachrymose storm, which had partially cleared away, broke forth again, threatening to settle down into a regular, monotonous ruin.

"This won't do," said the man, springing up energetically. "The stage'll be along in half an hour, and at this rate I'll not be ready. Can't you git me out half a dozen clean shirts, as many pair of socks, a handkercheer or two, and—don't forgit my night-cap, will you? Hurry, now, and put 'em in the varlice, as I must take the first stage."

"What, that soon, Mr. Swartwout? Your clothes——"

"All ready, provided you git me the shirts and things."

And with that the man hurried out of the room. It was clear that, although a bachelor, he knew something of woman's nature. He doubtless argued that nothing would so speedily overcome his companion's despondency as to set her to "packing." Nor was he mistaken. Slowly and languidly at first, the woman began to select from an old-fashioned bureau, before which she had droopingly knelt, the various garments that had been mentioned, running her eyes slowly over them between the intervals in which she was compelled to take off her spectacles to rub them with her apron. But as she discovered button after button which she thought needed fastening, and every here and there a point

where a stitch could be supplied to advantage, her manner gradually changed. Her movements became quick and energetic. The moisture still stood on her shrivelled cheeks, but none any longer came from her eyes, although there was a sigh now and then; and by the time Martin Swartwout again made his appearance she was working as busily as any girl of sixteen making ready for her own wedding trip.

"La me! where on arth did you git them clothes?"

The old lady held up her hands in utter astonishment at the metamorphosis her master had undergone in his absence; for he stood before her in habiliments in which she had not only never before seen him, but which she had never supposed him to possess.

"Them's my city suit," he replied, stepping first to one side and then to the other, to show his outfit to the best advantage; "made on purpose fur this journey, more'n three years ago. You see, when Clinton would go to York spite of me, I knowed he'd git into trouble sooner or later, and so I jist went and ordered them clothes to be ready agin the time. As I calculated I'd have to appear among folks of quality down there, I told the tailor to git 'em up according to the very newest style, regardless of expense. So them's the very latest touch."

With that the speaker turned a complete circle on his heel to exhibit his wonderful costume to his admiring companion. The clothes had, unquestionably, been constructed according to the newest style at the

time they were made, having been faithfully cut after the last fashion-plate received by the country tailor ; but the period of three years, although but a span in the world's lifetime, often works wonderful revolutions in the dominion of dress. The tail of the fashionable coat had, in the meanwhile, crept up nearly a foot, while the collar had suffered proportionate abbreviation ; and, as for the pantaloons, while Martin Swartwout's nether garment tended to rank extravagance, the latest fashion had made them simply a second skin to the limb. The appearance of the old gentleman, as he thus stood for inspection, would have provoked any judge of the newest style to laughter, but as neither he nor his companion was aware of the inconsistency, the effect in this case was quite the opposite.

"There is the stage!" suddenly shouted the old man, as the sound of approaching wheels was heard upon the not very even road in front of the house. "Where's my varlise? things all packed?" and, upon receiving an affirmative response, he seized the great carpet-bag—big enough for an ordinary family—and turned to bid his housekeeper good bye.

"Now Mr. Swartwout," said she anxiously, "do take care of yourself in that—that dreadful place—now do!"

The man's only response was to walk up to her and bestow a ringing kiss upon her lips.

Had she been met with a slap direct in the face, she could not have been more astonished, and, for

the moment, more indignant. Years had gone by since any one had presumed upon such a liberty with her, if, indeed, anybody had ever before sought and dared the deed and certainly as, for Martin Swartwout, he had never, provocative as he had always been, attempted the like—never. The color mounted to her forehead, her eyes snapped vehemently, and a sharp word would unquestionably have been hurled in the face of the offender, had not his back, as he turned to leave the house, before she could command her breath, already been towards her. Then the thought and sight of the man going away to that "dreadful place," wrought a sudden revolution in her feelings.

"Oh Mr. Swartwout, you've left your umbreller!" she exclaimed, as her eye at that moment fell upon the indispensable article she named, which had been overlooked in the hurry of the start.

Mr. Swartwout, arrested by that startling reminder, retraced his steps at the woman's call, only to encounter a surprise equal to the one he had just inflicted. Polly, as he took the forgotten article from her hand, threw her arms impulsively about his neck, and broke out into a great sob upon his shoulder.

"There, there, that's a good soul," said he, as soon as he had recovered from the shock, gently disengaging her arms from about his neck, and bringing his lips very near to, if not in actual contact with hers in the operation. Then he turned and hurried away.

"The Lord go with you!" mur-

mured the woman, her watery eyes following the form of her employer, after having first sharply, but vainly, looked about her to see if something else had not been overlooked.

And there she stood, wistfully straining her sight, until she had seen the stage slowly climb the slope, and, as it seemed to her at the time, very quickly disappear over the summit of the nearest hill on the road to the railroad depot a few miles off.

"What a sight of bother them boys does make!" she exclaimed aloud, wiping her eyes and heaving a deep sigh, as she turned into the house, "but who'd ever a-thought that Clinton was the one to git into trouble?"

How Clinton got "into trouble," and what came of it, I shall now proceed to relate according to the regular order of events.

CHAPTER II.

THE BOY MAKES KNOWN HIS RESOLUTION.

"MAG, I'm going to leave you!"

The tone in which the words were spoken certainly betrayed more of exultation than regret.

"Going back to school?"

"No."

"Where then?"

"To New York—to headquarters."

"You ain't."

The parties to the foregoing dialogue were a young gentleman and a young lady by courtesy—in fact, a boy and girl. The male, to judge from his appearance, could not have greatly exceeded eighteen, although

a well-developed scion of a brawny race, as native American husband-men generally are; the female, not over fourteen, although she, too, was tall and admirably proportioned for her age.

To dispense with all unnecessary mystery, I will at once state that the senior of the two was that Clinton Maintland who appears as the object of so much solicitude to two worthy people in the preceding chapter. He was the son of Hugh Maintland, an honest, but far from prosperous farmer, as will be readily surmised when it is known that he was only a "renter." He, the father, belonged to that most unfortunate class of laborers, happily in this country not very numerous, who, tilling soil which is not their own, give largely of the sweat of their faces to provide bread for such as are not of their blood, to eat.

Hugh Maintland had once been better off. A good many years before, he had held title to the ground upon which he still lived and struggled, a heritage from his father; but fortune had dealt slightly with him from the first. With sickness in his family, and one disaster after another, had come an indebtedness which had, in more than one sense, been an anchor to his energies. It had finally dragged him down bodily, and bound him helpless at the bottom. That debt he had never been able to pay through his own exertions. He had satisfied the first creditor, but it had been by borrowing the money, at an increased rate of interest, from his rich neighbor, Colonel Kortright, and giving a mort-

gage to secure its repayment, upon the farm. That mortgage had proved a moth which finally consumed the place. The interest not being paid, in the end the title passed to the creditor, and the stripped and despondent debtor was only too glad for the privilege of remaining a tenant upon the soil which had always seemed to treat him with ingratitude. With an invalid wife and a large family of little children, by the time his oldest son, Clinton, had reached the age of eighteen—the period at which our story really opens—he was so broken in spirit that he scarcely hoped for any improvement in his worldly condition.

And yet there were few who appeared better qualified for success. Physically, he was a noble specimen of a man, standing over six feet in height, with all his parts in proportion. Mentally, too, he was above the average. He had read much, and his mind was abundantly stored with general knowledge; but even learning had proved to him a hindrance and a drawback. It had made him a politician, and politics had exacted of him much time and money that brought him no adequate return. He had not been without ambition, and, on several occasions had aspired to office; but his party, which never hesitated to demand his vote and his services, had always given him the cold shoulder, and the coveted positions to richer and more fortunate men. Still he never swerved from his political allegiance. With him party was a matter of principle. He was what in the language of the day was known as a

Conservative, and the soldier on the field of battle would have sooner deserted the standard of his chief and country, than Hugh Maintland the cause of his party.

With such a parent, poverty-ridden though he was, Clinton Maintland's youth had not been without opportunities which the boyhood of many entering the world under what are regarded as more happy auspices, fails to supply. He had not only inherited his father's splendid physical development, and his strong mental characteristics, but had received from him the rudiments of a solid primary education. Perhaps, however, no circumstance had contributed more to his advancement in the past, and promised more substantial benefits in the future, than the fact of his having early gained the decided affection of his bachelor uncle, Martin Swartwout, his mother's half-brother, and the resident of an adjoining town, who, although destitute of his brother-in-law's useless culture, and accustomed to boast that "he had no politics," had not only succeeded by the exercise of native shrewdness in accumulating an independent property, but was possessed of that practical knowledge of men, which made him a valuable adviser and assistant to a youth ambitious to make his way in the world. Through his influence, Clinton had, after working on the farm with his father through the summer months, passed several of the preceding winters at a school of high grade in Baytown, his uncle's village, finding a home and welcome by his kinsman's fireside.

The other party to the conversation, with a fragment of which this chapter opens, was Margaret Kortright, daughter of that Colonel Kortright, to whom reference has already been made. To perceive the difference in the social positions of the young people, it is only necessary for the reader to know that Margaret's father was not only Hugh Maintland's landlord, but the wealthiest man in all the country round. He, too, was a man of superior intelligence, and something of a politician. But such was the contrast between his political career and that of his tenant, that he not merely belonged to the opposite party, being a pronounced Radical, but had never sought for office without securing it. The rich and influential Colonel Kortright had only to ask a nomination at the hands of his party, and it was granted as a matter of course. He had been honored with several highly responsible and lucrative positions, and, at the date of the incidents now recorded, was a Senator in the State Legislature. Otherwise, there was no very wide divergence between the more prominent traits of the two men. Kortright was fully as much of a partisan as Maintland, quite as positive in his convictions, and even more intolerant of the opinions of those politically opposed to him. The disdain with which he looked down upon his tenant, because he was poor and thriftless, was more than matched by the aversion with which he was accustomed to regard him as a political opponent—a conservative—"a foggy and a Bourbon."

Colonel Kortright was a widower his deceased wife, who had died several years before, leaving behind her an ample estate which she had held in her own right, and a daughter as the only heir to inherit it, who was the Margaret Kortright we have discovered in conversation with poor Hugh Maintland's son.

A glance at the attire of the young people, as they sat talking to each other, was quite sufficient to reveal the distance between their worldly stations. Clinton Maintland was decently dressed for a farmer's lad—nothing more. His garments were of coarse home-made linen—the vest being wanting—and with the exception of the coat, which had been laid aside during hours of labor, showed the stains of the day's employment; for he was then on his way home from the field. His throat was collarless, and his feet were covered by heavy shoes, without the addition of stockings. His apparel would hardly have seemed decent in the society in which in which he was found, but for the broad-brimmed hat of plaited straw—likewise home-made—he was wearing, which, being set upon the head in a somewhat jaunty way, gave a certain redeeming but indescribable finish to his rustic outfit. But, happily, in his case appearances did not depend wholly upon dress. There was that of pleasant and manly beauty in the young man's face, and a poise and shapeliness about his person, in the posture of unstudied ease and grace in which he had thrown himself, that would have gone a great way with almost any member of the other sex

to compensate for deficiencies of apparel. The youth enjoyed the reputation of being decidedly "good-looking," and certainly deserved it.

The maiden, as became her station, was much more richly attired. Her hat, which was altogether a coquetish affair, had a snowy feather in it, and she was the wearer, besides, of several articles of jewelry. Her gown was of some costly stuff, but a noticeable rent on one side, and a certain disorder perceptible about it, gave assurance of hard, if not careless usage, and would have quite unfitted its wearer for immediate presentation to "company."

The two young persons—and I have carried these details to a length which would seem quite unnecessary, but for the fact that I am now introducing parties who are to sustain prominent, if not the leading, parts in the transactions hereafter to be recorded—presented at this time simply their usual appearance at the close of a day's employment; for it was the last hour of sun-light—Margaret as she had left her lessons and plays, and Clinton, as he was proceeding homeward from his work.

The meeting had been accidental—at least there was no understanding which had brought it about. The girl had been loitering in the path when Clinton made his appearance. The only singularity about the occurrence was, that the same thing had happened several times before. In that, however, there was nothing so remarkable. If the maiden had been asked why it was she had put herself in her present companion's way so often, she would have answered

frankly and without a blush, that it was, "because she liked Clinton." If he, on the other hand, had been asked why he was accustomed to stop and chat with the maid, he would have replied with equal freedom, that it was "because he liked the little girl." Those rejoinders would have explained everything. He was a young man, eighteen years old, and she was simply a child—only fourteen. How wide a chasm four years make at that period of our existence! How brief the interval when life's serious responsibilities walk with us through the sunshine and the shadow! Love and hate can then step across it with the ease that the child o'erleaps the tiny rill that trickles from the hillside—only four years!

The immediate point of the interview—for the general locality was a wealthy farming district in the central portion of the State of New York—was a somewhat secluded spot, about midway between the homes of the parties. A few old trees, left standing when the original forest had been swept away, furnished shelter both from observation and the heat of the sun. To add to its convenience and attractiveness as a meeting-place, a stone fence—once marking the boundary line between the lands of Hugh Maintland and Colonel Kortright, but now falling in ruin—supplied desirable seats to such as wanted them. The lookout, too, from that particular point was most inviting. Upon the one hand, on rising ground, was to be seen the stately homestead of the prosperous Colonel Kortright, surrounded,

guard-like, by a battalion of fine old maples, and attended by out-buildings of the most ample proportions. On the other hand, and down upon a lower plane, as became the subordinate position of its occupant, was the humble and homely dwelling of the luckless Hugh Maintland. There was nothing about it, certainly, that was attractive; and yet the view beyond, extending far down a gradually narrowing valley, with a high bluff on one side and a gentle acclivity on the other, was most lovely to behold. Whatever inducement had taken Margaret Kortright there at that special hour, when Clinton Maintland would be proceeding homeward from the field, there the two young people were; and having met in such a place, it was not at all strange that they should seat themselves upon the old fence, at a becoming distance from each other, and begin a conversation.

"You ain't!"

If the announcement to which these last quoted words were a rejoinder had been delivered with more of exultation than regret, the contradiction itself expressed more of regret than incredulity.

"Oh yes I am, Mag—seriously."

"When are you going?"

"To-morrow."

But seeing the sorrowful expression which filled the great eyes that looked up into his face at this announcement, the boy's heart relented, and he made haste to explain:

"I'm not going all the way to New York for a long time yet, Mag. I go only as far as Baytown to-morrow. There I am to teach the village

school, stopping with my uncle Martin Swartwout, who is to give me my board for nothing. Meanwhile I am to get books from Squire Bastion, the lawyer, and read during my leisure time. Uncle Martin has made the arrangement. Then, when I have learned law enough, and have been examined and admitted to the bar—as they call it—I shall have enough money saved to pay my way to New York and set me a-going there. It's Uncle Martin's plan—all, except going to New York. You don't know Uncle Martin, of course. He's such a droll old fellow—mighty kind, though—and knows, oh, ever so much! He says that if he had my head and my chance, he'd make himself another Van Buren—his name, you see, is Martin, too—and he believes Van Buren, whom he shook hands with once, was the greatest man that ever lived. He says it's nothing but homicide—that's his word; I shall know all about it when I get to be a lawyer, I suppose—to stay here and waste my energies, as my father has done before me. Uncle Martin's idea, however, is to have me stay in Baytown, and go in partnership with old Bastion; but that's not my notion. I've always had a fancy to see New York, and sometime live there. It's the centre of creation—New York is. Everything's there. And when I get to be a lawyer, I might just as well begin at headquarters at once, as start in a little cross-roads town that will never be anything. So, it's to New York I'm going."

"I've heard there were so many bad people there—murderers, and

robbers, and—and everything that's dreadful," responded Margaret, discouragingly, to her companion's glowing picture.

"Just the kind of folks we lawyers want," replied the youthful bumpkin, as consequentially 'as if he already wore a barrister's gown. "They're the ones we make our money and reputations out of. I hope I'll find lots of murderers when I get to New York."

"But why not stay here, Clinton, instead of going away off among those bad, bad people? I should so like to have you stay."

There was something in the voice of the girl, as she leaned forward and uttered these simple, earnest words, that reached a chord in the boy's bosom further down than his vanity. It brought him from his high horse at once. He grew serious, and, having paused a few moments for reflection, solemnly delivered his reply:

"Mag, I'll tell you why. It's because I'm nobody here. I'm only a renter's son—a clod-hopper; and Uncle Martin tells me I'll never be anything else if I stay here. Uncle Martin's right, too. I know he is; I feel it. Your father lives up on a hill, in a fine house; and my father lives down in a hollow, in a plain house; and your folks always will despise our folks until we get upon a hill, too."

"Clinton, I don't despise you."

"No, Mag, I know you don't *yet*—"

Here the young man stopped a moment, as if trying to choke down some bitter thoughts, and then went on:

"You don't *yet*, Mag, and I don't intend, if I can help it, that you ever shall. When I'm a lawyer, and have plenty of money—perhaps a member of the Legislature, like your father—I'll come back and see you."

And here, as the speaker turned his eyes patronizingly upon his juvenile companion, a blush suddenly overspread his countenance, either at the perception of the ridiculousness of his boast, or on account of the picture which rose before his mind, in connection with that proposed visit to the little lady then sitting by his side.

Whatever his meditation, it soon became apparent that a different emotion was at that moment at work in the maiden's bosom. Meeting his condescending look with a steady, pleading gaze, her words gushed forth as if they could no longer be restrained.

"Oh, Clinton, I do so wish you wouldn't go away!"

And with that the speaker's fortitude completely deserted her, a loud sob followed, the tears started down her cheeks, and her hands went up to her face.

Clinton was surprised—momentarily confounded. His indecision, however, quickly passed. Moving his seat to the girl's side, without, perhaps, exactly knowing what he was doing, he put his arm about her waist, and, drawing her to him, began to utter some hurried and incoherent protestations by way of consolation, while he imprinted kiss after kiss upon so much of her forehead as was unprotected by her hands.

It was the first time he had ever

taken such a liberty with a female, and, as for Margaret, beyond a formal pressure from the cold lips of her father, she was wholly unused to such a demonstration, having been educated into the observance of the strictest propriety in her intercourse with strangers. It is no wonder, therefore, that both parties were pretty soon astonished at what had happened, their eyes meeting in an awkward confession of amazeement. Happily, at that crisis relief came in the faint tinkle of a bell from the mansion on the hill.

"Oh, that's for tea!" hastily exclaimed the girl; "my father will be wondering where I am; I must go."

At the word "father," the obtrusive arm of her companion, which up to that moment had obstinately retained its place about her person, was quickly withdrawn, and the liberated maiden, slipping down from the fence, ran up the hillside to her home, occasionally drying her eyes with her apron as she proceeded, and in her haste quite forgetting to say good bye to the companion she had left.

That young man remained standing by the wall as if rooted to the spot, his eyes following the girl until she disappeared from their sight among the trees and shrubbery surrounding her father's house. Even then he did not stir nor withdraw his gaze from the place where he had last seen her. His mind was at that moment too profoundly employed to admit of bodily sense or motion. A revelation had come to him. Instantaneously, as it seemed, he had caught sight of a new exis-

tence, involving new responsibilities and new hopes. As by a lightning's flash the whole aspect of the future was changed. He now saw how insignificant were the objects which had before inspired his ambition, compared with the destiny which might involve two souls instead of one—two lives to be glorified or darkened forever, according to the relation they were to bear to each other. A new purpose to live for rose up before him, and he stood entranced in the presence of the vision. Henceforward he was to be another man. It might be for better, or it might be for worse, but his soul had known a transformation. His spirit had experienced the sweetest and at the same time the most poignant of sensations—the knowledge of its capacity to love.

Meanwhile the minutes sped on. The last rays from that day's sun were illuminating the higher ground where stood "The Maples," as the Kortright mansion was called, bathing it and all its surroundings in a flood of dazzling splendor, while the lower plane, supporting the home of poor Hugh Maintland, was already clothed in shadow—a contrast strikingly suggestive of the diverse fortunes of the houses. Slowly the shadow crept up the hillside, covering first the shrubbery in the yard, then the lower story of the great house, and finally the whole structure, and then night, which is so truly typical of that darkness which is to sweep over high and low, placed the homesteads for a time upon an equality. At the same time a slight breeze passed through the

treetops, sending down a leaf or two from the branches overhead, for the last days of summer had come. The sound recalled the youth beneath to consciousness. Heaving a sigh, and turning once more in the direction of the hill, he exclaimed aloud and bitterly :

"It's hard, hard, hard to go away! but how much more is it now my duty. It's my only chance!"

Then striking into the path, which had grown almost imperceptible, he moved slowly in the direction of his father's dwelling, and was soon lost to sight in the darkness.

Years went by before the parties who, as boy and girl, had thus so unceremoniously parted from each other, again met.

Upon Margaret's late arrival at her home, she found her father anxiously awaiting her, and, as was plain to be seen, in no very pleasant humor. Nothing unusual was said until tea was over, when, taking his daughter into his study, he told her that he had learned through the servants, that she had been in the habit of meeting and conversing with their neighbor Maintland's son, at the same time demanding to be informed where she had been that very evening. In Margaret's then agitated state of mind, it was an easy matter for her father to obtain a disclosure of what had passed between her and Clinton at the interview just ended, not excepting the familiarities in which he had indulged, with the still more aggravating confession that she was very "fond" of him. Colonel Kortright's rage upon earning these facts from his daugh-

ter's own lips, was almost uncontrollable. He sternly forbade her ever thinking of Clinton Maintland again; told her that he was absolutely nobody—only the son of a renter, who was the next thing to a beggar. "The detestable old Bourbon!" he exclaimed, as he paced up and down the room, "I must get rid of him the very first opportunity—rout him out with all his worthless crew!" The Kortrights, he told Margaret, were all people of position. To consort with one so much beneath her as Maintland's son, he assured her, was to bring disgrace both upon herself and her family, and the offence was one never to be repeated. He then ordered the weeping culprit to her room, with the injunction that she should not leave it without his permission.

The next day, about the same hour that Clinton Maintland set out from his father's house on foot, with a small satchel swung over his shoulder, on his way to Baytown, as the first stage in his contemplated journey to fame and fortune, she left her home on her way to a distant and noted fashionable boarding-school. Not long afterwards her father saw fit to supply her deceased mother's place with a second wife, whose haughty and jealous temper stood like a wall between parent and child. As the young man she had left standing by the old stone fence in her father's grove went forward in pursuance of the resolution he had there avowed, carrying in his bosom the image of a little girl of fourteen, never growing older nor more womanly as the days and years stole

on, she, the original of that heart-picture, developed into a tall and lovely female, whose destiny guided her into paths that for a time led her steps apart from his.

To what extent the youthful adventurer's soul-companion proved to be his good genius in the trials he was called upon to encounter in the execution of his resolve—for no one enters into a great city to seek his fortune there alone, without entering into the fire—cheering him when he was despondent, strengthening him when tempted, and stimulating him to increased exertion when he was over-taxed, he was only in part himself conscious. Clinton's difficulties began before he reached New York. In the first place, his father disapproved of the course he had decided upon. To retain the services of so valuable an assistant upon the farm was a selfish, but not altogether unnatural, desire on the part of one bending beneath the burdens of his lot. His mother stood in his way. Not that she opposed one word to his purpose of seeking his fortune elsewhere, although the best loved of all her children ; but his love for her made it very hard for him to leave the parental roof. And finally, when all other obstacles had yielded, and, after a laborious preparatory course of study, he stood a most creditable examination, and received a certificate authorizing him to practice the profession he had adopted, he had his best friend, Martin Swartwout, to oppose the carrying out of his plan for going to New York. That kind-hearted old gentleman wanted his nephew to settle down in Baytown,

and become the partner of his friend, lawyer Bastion. He could see no sense, he declared, in any one wanting to go to a place where there were too many people already. Folks with heads could get along very well elsewhere. Martin Van Buren had even got to be President in a country town ; and that was enough for him to know.

Good soul ! he dearly loved his nephew, and the thought of losing his society was really at the bottom of his objection, although he had succeeded in persuading himself that the most disinterested motives alone influenced his conduct. But the young man had a will as well as the old one ; and the result was that, with the assistance of Polly Brown, who from sheer perversity had taken his side in the contest, working with great industry to get him ready for the journey, he set forth one sunshiny day in early spring for the goal of his ambition, supplied with a few hundred dollars, the savings of his labors as a teacher, and a stout, trusting heart. Before he started, however, the following conversation passed between him and his uncle :

"Clint, it's my belief that you'll succeed, fur I tell you you've got a head fur somethin great ; but afore you go, there's one thing I want you to promise me."

"What is it, uncle?"

"That you will write me an honest—recollect the word now—an *honest* account of how you git along when you reach the great Bablon."

"I will, uncle."

"And I want you further to pro-

mise that, if you ever git into enny scrape—enny downright serious trouble that you can't see your way out of—you'll immediately lit me know."

"I promise."

"Then go, and may the Lord go with you!"

CHAPTER III.

THE BONE IN THE STORY.

OF the ten thousand young men from the country who, with favorable prospects and bright hopes, annually enter New York city with a view to permanent residence, nine thousand had better at once cast themselves into the sea.

It is not that New York is overfull of such material. There is not another place in the wide world which furnishes a better opening—nor as good—to beginners of sterling character and reasonable acquirements; nor one where the demand is so ill met by the supply. Never was there a time without ample room there for all the good men that offered themselves, and when their disproportion to the bad—who, logically, should be displaced—has not been startlingly apparent. Other causes of failure to so many who venture with equal chances of success into the competition of our great metropolis must, therefore, be sought.

Some there undoubtedly are, who, lacking the proverbial tenacity of the American character, and becoming disheartened and unmanned, drift

back to country walks and merited obscurity; but the number is surprisingly small. City life—especially New York city life—has a wonderfully subtle fascination. Like wine, whose properties grow with time and use, few, having partaken of its mingled bitterness and sweet, are ever after able to turn away from the excitement and abandon of its terrible activity, even in the crisis of wrecked and drowning hope. The current is against their escape. The tide that with us flows city-ward never ebbs. The drift upon its bosom takes but one direction. American society at best is a whirlpool whose waters, while spreading into wider circles as their volume increases, draw ever more powerfully toward the centre. New York city is the focus of our National Maelstrom.

There is no intention on the part of the writer of these pages to attempt an enumeration or description of the sensual and vulgar enticements which crouch along every avenue of the great city, and which drag their thousands down to ruin. With the perils of the grosser sort he shall have nothing to do. He proposes to follow, for the main channel of his narrative, the career of a youth of country birth and preparation, who seeks our largest city with the same hopes and prospects that annually take their thousands there. He has already given the reader a glimpse of the man. He presents him as well moulded in form and spirit—with plenty of each—a youth of good person, good intellect, good heart, and good training, with such

weaknesses only as are common to, almost inseparable from, our national type—not a hero in any super-ideal sense—not a paragon exactly—not a whit better, in fact, than the average of young men who leave the country for the city; for the city, it must be recollected, culls the flower of the country's manhood, alas! too often to blight it.

The writer chooses that channel for his story, partly because it conducts to experiences in which American life—our life—finds both its most searching tests and its most startling exhibitions; for he holds that there is no society which more than ours, by reason of its clear, positive traits, and intense activities, supplies the elements of genuine, engrossing romance; and partly because it would most fitly seem to illustrate one of the outgrowths of our political and social systems, which, although not always admitted as an evil—not even as a defect—is in truth and in fact the rock upon which untold numbers go to wreck. That the story itself may serve as a lighthouse to warn some of the peril which has proved fatal to so many—the writer means the too prevalent inclination to a political life, with its tendency to over-excitement and intensified partisanship, and which ordinarily finds in the struggles of a great city's diversified and eager masses and classes, its strongest and most dramatic expression—is a hope that is not concealed. Assuredly, the danger is sufficiently real to justify the attempt at its delineation. That partisanship is one of the banes, if not its greatest, infecting our civil

organization and penetrating to all its parts, who will deny? It is the thorn, to change the figure, which grows abhorrent amid the rich clusters of our political privileges and liberties. It is the blight which too often strikes to the root of the entire social system. The lesson which the contemplation of this national infirmity in its inevitable weakness would teach, while the writer aims to weave a tale in which the men and women we know shall hold and act their several appropriate parts—exclusively and faithfully American—is, consequently, to be the bone in the story.

At the same time, the author is not unaware that the policy of putting a bone into a story at all, or rather of admitting its existence, is questioned and questionable. There are plenty of novel-consumers, possibly the greater number, who prefer to take their fiction as they do their meats, with all hard and obstinate substances removed before cooking—or like bivalves that have been carefully extracted from the shell. But who, after all, is so credulous as to suppose it possible to fashion a story of human conduct, sufficiently near to the reality of practical life to possess either interest or value, which will not convey a lesson? which will not contain a moral or an *immoral* somewhere in its development? The instruction, as well as the motive, may be hidden, but like a beast of prey in ambush, or a serpent—most likely with poison in its fang—in the grass, it lurks somewhere ready to leap forth at a moment when its presence is least suspect-

ed. It matters not what the writer may intend; it is not possible for him to fabricate from events that have meaning, and men and women that have character, a perfectly marrowless thing, try as hard as he may. Human transactions do their own teaching.

Rejecting all disguises, the writer hereof not only announces thus early in his story his purpose to put a bone into it, but frankly tells what the bone is to be, that any one not likely to relish the quality of the dish, may dismiss it at once. He would add, however, by way of qualification, that, while he admits an object in his work, he has no reference to a partisan one. In giving the incidents of a tale which is intended in some degree to illustrate the evil effects of party spirit in others, he has honestly sought to divest himself of all party bias of his own. Thus, unimpeded by what would seem to be the chiefest hindrance to its faithful execution, he addresses himself to a task, in the performance of which his fear is not so much that he may be accused of transgressing the bounds of a reasonable probability, as that he may be suspected of copying too closely after actual personages and events.

CHAPTER IV.

SEEKING A FOOTHOLD

Martin Swartwout to Clinton Mainland.

BAYTOWN, N. Y.

DEER NEFYU: I sea yuv got the Blews. It's gist as I sed. Yu wood gow a way and leve yur frends, and now yuv got tu ake fur it.

Wel, it's a leetle tuff, but it wun't dew yu no harm if yur maid ov the staf tu bare it. It's a queston ov pluck and in durance. That's all. Yu no I didn't a pruv ov yur goin tu that grate Bablon, but now, seain yur thare, it's yur plase and dewty tu hang on. The opertuntiy yu seam so much tu want, all ways cums tu them that's willin tu wate fur it. That's the obswervashun ov yur unkle, hoos sean sum thing ov human natur, if hees never sean New York.

Don't think I'm growl in, fur I aint. I luv yu all the saim, and if my best wishes fur yur well fare is ov enny a count tu yu, yur welcun tu enny a mount ov them.

And now, Cl'int, don't furgit yur promis. Yur tu let me no what ever hapens—good or bad—speely bad.

Poly sends hur luv, and ses as how if yur a good boy, yul be hapy and prosper.

As I'm not yused tu ritin, yu must egs-cuse moor from

Yur luvin old unkle,

MARTIN SWARTWOUT.

Clinton Mainland to Martin Swartwout.

DEAR UNCLE: To make good my promise, I again write you; but it's the old, old story. No clients yet. Others about me are busy—very busy; but for some unaccountable reason employment keeps beyond my reach. I hardly know what to think of it. I feel that I have that in me—both the knowledge and the ability—to do justice to interests which I sometimes see but indifferently served, if I were only given the opportunity. Oh, for a foothold!

Still I do not despair. I remember the words of your last letter. I shall certainly “hang on” as long as I can. What an honest, affectionate counsellor you are!

I have made another change in my domestic arrangements. I told you in my last letter that I had given up my room at the boarding-house, on account of the expense. I now both sleep and eat in my office. Such provisions as I can purchase at a convenient bake-shop, and smuggle into my room after night-fall—for it would never answer for a professional man to be suspected of anything so low—with water from

the hydrant, supply all my bodily wants. The only question is, unless there should be a change for the better in my affairs, how long I can sustain even the expenditure this mode of living involves. I have still ten dollars of my money left.

Believe me, as ever,

Your loving nephew,
CLINTON MAINTLAND.

Clinton Maintland to Martin Swartwout.

DEAR UNCLE: I have spent the last dollar of my money, and no clients. Still, as I have some books and clothes I do not immediately need, I am not entirely destitute. You may rely on my "hanging on" to the last. As ever,

Your loving nephew,
CLINTON MAINTLAND.

Martin Swartwout to Clinton Maintland.

DEER NEYU: I like yur spunk. I all ways sed yu had a hed to suesced. Hang on and be a man, if yu dew starve.

The frends hear is all well and very cum-furthel, cept Poly, hoos ben wurryin conceid-abel uv lait.

Glad tu heer ov yur helth and spirts.

Yur luvin unkle,
MARTIN SWARTWOUT.

Clinton Maintland to Martin Swartwout.

DEAR, DEAR UNCLE: Victory at last! My opportunity has come! A foothold is gained! I am saved—saved, although I had reached the very brink. I was standing on the precipice's edge, and looking down into the abyss. Will you wonder at the language I use, when you know that I was starving—actually starving.

But, before I begin the story of my escape, I must tell you something more of the strait to which I had been reduced.

Upon my arrival here, finding that the hotel at which I was stopping, and which was called first-class, would soon exhaust all my means, I sought out a very plain, but decent, boarding-house. That was my first step. Still, by the time I had secured and furnished an office, and that most eco-

nomically, one half of my money was gone. Then, as business did not come, I found it necessary, first to give up my room at the lodging-house, and, finally, to both eat and sleep in my office.

Remembering the saying, that, "If you keep your office, it will keep you," I at first remained close to my desk; but, as day after day, and even week after week, passed, except monthly the agent for the collection of the rent, not one human being darkened my door, save an old, muttering beggar, who occasionally halted at the threshold with doleful countenance and outstretched palm. Even his presence I felt as a relief well worth the penny I was accustomed to throw him.

Finding that business was not coming to me of its own accord, I concluded to go out and look for it. But I was a stranger. I had no letters of introduction, and when I tried to introduce myself, I was met with coldness, and sometimes with insult. I was proud—prouder than I thought—and I instinctively shrank from contact with men who cared nothing for me, and took very little pains to conceal their indifference. Others, I found, begged for employment as a favor; but I could not. I would have died first.

I visited the courts, and saw attorneys with their hands full of business—and sometimes I flattered myself that I could have done better than they did—but that consciousness appeared to be shared by no one else. How aggravating it was! I felt neglected; and, of course, wretched. I tried to keep my spirits up, but I could not prevent occasional despondency. I seemed to myself to be a useless, helpless creature, and sometimes the question entered my mind, spite of me, whether I wouldn't be better out of the way; and then dark thoughts of the river that flows past the great city would come and haunt me like so many enemies of the soul.

I think it was in part because I did not have enough to eat. I had now left my boarding-house, and was sustaining life upon the least possible outlay. I never indulged in any luxuries. I never visited any places of amusement, much as I longed to see

some of the great artists, whose names were on everybody's lips. Others I could not help see enjoying themselves—eating and drinking and making merry, seemingly careless of the future ; and oh, how hungry, and sometimes, how desperate, it made me ! At such times it was all I could do to avoid the commission of something frightfully rash and criminal. Then I had no one to sympathize with me—no one to talk over my hopes and apprehensions with. Oh, how much, dear uncle, I would have given for one hour to be face to face with you ! It was terrible to be thus all alone in the midst of thousands and thousands. For a green country boy to enter a great city is like leaping into the sea. You feel the cold waves go over you, and you shiver from very contact with the human flood. A crowd forever sweeps by you, and yet nobody speaks to you—nobody cares for you—not one familiar face in all the throng. The sense of your insignificance grows more and more painful. It is hard to be absolutely nobody.

I have often thought what must be the agony of one sentenced to the scaffold ; but I do not believe that for days, and even weeks, as I felt the pangs of growing want and saw the gaunt form of starvation coming nearer and nearer, my sufferings were infinitely greater, although I had been guilty of no crime—unless it was in neglecting your advice to keep away from this great, selfish city. After my experience, I shall never fail to sympathize with, and help, when I can, young men who are here struggling for a foothold without influence and without friends. I don't wonder any longer that so many of them fail and go to the bad. I see it all now. It is not so much that the temptations of a city life are stronger and more numerous, as that the discouragements of hungering in the midst of excessive plenty—of feeling constant privation in the presence of luxury and splendor—of acknowledging failure where so many are brilliantly successful, to one who is young and sensitive in time make life intolerable, and cause the soul to revolt against the laws of both God and man. The man gives way to despair, and is lost.

Take hope from an angel, and you have a devil.

I do verily believe that I should have sunk under the trial, had it not been for your brave advice to "hang on." I did think it a little—just a little—unkind in you to give me that counsel, without at the same time offering some assistance, knowing as you did that starvation was at my heels ; but I did not doubt your heart, and could not, somehow or other, altogether question your judgment. You, my dear uncle, are entitled to the credit of my rescue, and yours shall be both the gratitude and praise.

But I have not told you all my trouble. Thus far my experience had been that of hundreds—nay, of thousands—who have risked the same experiment in this vast metropolis. I was now to enter on another phase of my trial. My money was all gone. I then made out a list of such effects as I had, with which I could dispose, and yet manage to keep up a respectable appearance—for you know a professional man might as well give up at once as appear shabby. The schedule was not very long. I had two suits of clothes, and could wear but one at a time. As for my overcoat, I should not need that before cold weather, and by that time the battle would be over one way or the other. Some of my furniture I could dispense with on a pinch. And besides I had a few books I could get along without.

Having finished my list of available assets, I started out one night, soon after dusk, with my overcoat on my arm, that being the article least likely to be missed. Taking an inferior street I followed it until I found myself under three golden balls glittering in the gaslight—the sign of a pawn-broker. Looking about, and seeing that no one appeared to be observing me, I dodged in. There I found a short, deformed man, with a glittering eye—he had but one—crouching behind a high counter, and for all the world reminding me of a spider in human form. I felt like a fly as soon as I came into his presence. He understood my situation, at a glance, and immediately began a rigmorole about old clothes being a drug, and nobody buying

overcoats in summer. Nevertheless he took my garment and examined it over and over, at last, with much shrugging of the shoulders and many protestations of liberality, offering to advance five dollars on it. I felt so utterly humiliated in his presence that I made no protest at the smallness of the sum, but, taking the money and a ticket authorizing me to redeem the article, hurried out of the den.

On my way back, stopping at a bake-shop, I bought a loaf of bread and some crackers for my next day's sustenance, and gave away a dollar—a whole dollar—to a poor creature whom I found to be a great deal worse off than I was—I'll tell you the story hereafter—and strange to say, dear uncle, after making the sacrifice, felt really much richer than before.

Then having, from the result of my first experience with the pawn-broker, entered upon a calculation of my probable resources, I saw that I was indeed near the end of my course, unless relief in some totally unexpected form presented itself. I might manage to supply myself with the necessaries of life for a considerable period, living in the economical manner I was then doing, but a more serious difficulty stared me in the face. My office rent had to be paid the first of every month, and to provide for the next installment, soon to be due, was impossible, even if I sacrificed everything on my list; and deprived of my office, all hope of gaining a foothold was gone. The crisis was alarmingly near; still there was nothing I could do but "hang on" in the shadowy hope that a client might drop in upon me—a murderer, a housebreaker, a forger, or some other similar angel in disguise—and save me from the threatened doom. I almost as much expected a fairy to come to my assistance.

Day after day went by as the preceding ones had done, and the first of the month was at hand. I sat in my office, momentarily expecting the grinning countenance of the obsequious rent-gatherer to appear, and I well knew the result when I made known the fact that I had neither the money to pay for another month's occupation,

nor any knowledge of where it was to be obtained. My meditations were, of course, dismal enough. At last I could endure the suspense no longer. I sprang to my feet, seized my hat, and started out upon the street, going I knew not where. I had walked on in that way for some time, when, suddenly raising my eyes, I shuddered at finding myself in presence of the Tombs, the well-known city prison. How long, I said to myself, before my residence may be there? But with that thought came a suggestion—one that was entirely new to me, and which I know will surprise you. If I were an inmate of the Tombs, charged with some great crime, I reasoned, I would at least be in a condition to be somebody's client; then, as every man accused of crime has a right to be his own lawyer, why not, in the absence of any other one willing to occupy that relation, be my own client? Upon that idea I acted.

I had learned the particulars of a robbery committed the day before. The thief had entered a bank during business hours, and offering a note to the teller to be changed into smaller denominations, had, while the latter's attention was fixed upon the bill, suddenly dashed a handful of mingled sand and dust into his face, and then, seizing a package of bank notes, had shot out of the building, and was lost in the crowd. The teller had seen enough of him before being blinded, only to know that he was a tall, muscular young man, with black hair, and that he had a bright purple scar running along one cheek under the eye. The description suited me exactly, with the exception of the scar.

Luckily for my purpose, it so happened that, during the hour in which the robbery was committed, I had been in court, attracted as a spectator by the interest I had taken in a criminal case then under trial, and as I was known to, and had conversed with several parties present, I concluded that I would have no difficulty in establishing the fact.

A little practice with red ink before a looking-glass, supplied me with a sufficiently brilliant scar upon one side of my face, and, thus disguised, I went forth to

the scene of my proposed operations. Before the bank where the theft had been committed, was standing a policeman. Managing to attract his attention, I hovered furtively about the door of the establishment for a few moments, and then started rapidly away. A glance behind gave me the satisfaction of knowing that I was pursued. I kept on until I came to another bank, and there, stopping upon the sidewalk, I entered upon an apparently cautious inspection of the premises. I had been thus employed but a few moments, when I felt the officer's hand upon my shoulder. I was arrested and unceremoniously marched to the place where the robbery had been executed, and submitted to the inspection of the man who had suffered the assault. He unhesitatingly pronounced me the culprit. Accordingly, I was carried away to prison, passing the next night in one of the cells of the Tombs.

The following day I was brought out for examination. In company with several desperate characters, I was conducted into the same room where I had been at the time the crime with which I stood charged was being perpetrated, and where the same judge was on the bench. Although the reported arrest of the supposed bank robber had created considerable excitement, and brought a good many people to the courtroom, I managed pretty well to escape observation in the midst of my companions, and the fact that I had carefully removed all ink-stains from my face was not noticed before my trial began. The first witness against me was the teller of the bank. With great confidence he took the stand and told his story. He knew I was the man, he said, and that without so much as turning his eyes towards me. There could be no doubt about it—he could identify me any place from my general appearance, but more especially from the scar upon my cheek.

Here the witness for the first time fixed his glance upon me, while I, at the same instant lifting my head and rising to my feet, stood before him face to face.

"The same scar was upon the man which you see——"

Here the poor fellow stopped, his eyes swelled to nearly twice their former proportions, and his lips stood agape, as he stared into my face with helpless perplexity, his own face turning almost crimson under my cool and steadfast gaze.

"Which you see—where?" sternly demanded the judge, who had been closely inspecting my countenance.

"Nowhere; I don't know whether this is the person or not!" finally faltered the confounded witness.

My release was assured; but to remove every trace of suspicion, I explained to the judge who I was, and that at the time the robbery was shown to have taken place, I had been in that very room, going on not only to relate particularly what had then transpired there, but giving the names of parties with whom I had been conversing, some of whom were then present in court to verify my words; and, indeed, the judge himself recollected seeing me there at the time.

Of course I did not need to add another word; but here was an opportunity which I felt that I could not afford to neglect; so obtaining from the court the privilege of making a few remarks, I proceeded to denounce in terms which could not possibly have contained more of indignant eloquence had I been the unwilling victim instead of the contriver of the whole affair, the blundering and cruel recklessness which had exposed me to such intolerable treatment.

Now I know very well, uncle, what you will say to all this—you with your rigid notions of honest dealing, and your stern dislike of all insincerity; but you must remember not only the license which is given to my profession, but the terrible strait in which I was placed. Necessity makes sad work sometimes with the nicest of our scruples.

Well, as a number of newspaper reporters had been attracted by the importance of the case, my remarks, with all the attending circumstances, were duly given to the public, accompanied in several instances with editorial comments, which were highly complimentary to me; so that I received a free advertisement, which would ordinarily

be regarded as a fortune to a professional man. But there were more immediate benefits. One of my fellow-prisoners, whose trial was to follow mine, and who had made up his mind to plead guilty, and so, as he said, save his money, on seeing how successful I had been, changed his purpose, and slipped into my hand a roll of bills—my first fee, and which I received with so much apparent indifference that I did not even then look at it—as a retainer of my services. I succeeded in securing his acquittal. This double success so enhanced my professional standing that, at the end of my second victory, I was promptly retained in another case—fortunately not to come off until the following day, and another fee was pocketed.

I might, perhaps, have secured other business, had I been able to remain in court, but the fact is, my strength was exhausted. I had eaten nothing that was really nourishing for days. Nature imperatively demanded relief, and as I had now the means, I was not long in finding a restaurant, and partaking of the first satisfactory meal I had enjoyed for nearly two months. I was the happy possessor, when I came to count my day's earnings, of over one hundred dollars—think of that! I have satisfied my delinquent office rent, and intend, as soon as night furnishes a cover to my movements, to again visit the shop of my blood-sucker friend, the pawn-broker—I hope for the last time, for the redemption of my coat.

This has been a long, long letter, dear uncle, but I can't conclude it without relating another instance of my luck, as I have no doubt it will prove to be. Fortune, in return for her many slights, has seemed resolved to shower all her blessings upon me at once. I can scarcely persuade myself, even as I am writing these facts, that the whole is not a dream.

As I was hurrying out of court, I was stopped near the door by a very gentlemanly man, whose address was so courteous—so different from what I had been accustomed to from strangers—that I could not help listening to him. He congratulated me upon my success, inquired my name

and place of business, and handing me his card, with the remark that it might be in his power to do me a service, asked me to call upon him at my convenience. Looking for the first time at the little piece of pasteboard he had handed me, when I was by myself, what was my astonishment to find upon it the name of one of the most famous and influential men in this city, a noted politician and office-holder, a sachem of the great Tammany Society, and who is known to control a great deal of business and patronage. What he wants of me I cannot imagine, but it can be nothing to my disadvantage.

And now, dear uncle, having told you my story, which you know me well enough to believe, notwithstanding it seems almost too good to be true, it remains for me only to again thank you for the great and considerate kindness you have always shown to

Your appreciative nephew,

CLINTON MAINTLAND.

—

Martin Swartwout to Clinton Mainland.

DEER NEFYU: Yur last has saived me a pack ov bother. I had my bag all pact—a half duzen cleen shirts, as menny soks, ditty hankercheefs, a botel ov corjeal fur tizeick, a coald chicken fur lunshun, and my nite-cap. Poly, hoo had ben a wurryin me most feerfull fur littin yu gow tu that dred-full plase, tho yu no she tuck yur side ov the queston, wanted me to take cleides a hole ham, a half quarter ov beaf, a jug ov bild sider, and a bucit ov elder gam, be cos she new yu was a starvin. I shud hav ben gon by the nixt stage. I lit yu no nothin ov my intenshun, be cos I wanted yu to hang on yurself as long as yu cud.

Now, Clint, I'm both glad and sorry tu heer ov yur suckees. Glad be cos I luv yu—sorry be cos yur now exposd tu a far grater pearl. I meen the risk ov over a bundance. What feeds the boddy, often starvs the sole.

Yu dont no why I posed yur goin tu New York—at lest the hole ov it. Hear I cud a kept an eye on yu, but thare yur all a lone, and thats the cos. New Yorks a bad, bad plase fur a yung man thats a risin, unles

hees got a muther, or a cros old unkle, or, bettern all, a wife, providin shees the rite kind ov a won, to keep an eye on him. As long as hees a starvin, it dont matter much whare he is ; fur then the bad wohs will lit him a lone. But when prosperity cums, then the temters thares a lejon, tho sum ov them dus cum in anjels forms.

Iv sean the pearl yur in from the start, bettern, I feer, than yu dew. Yung men is libel to be blinded, when old wons keap thare vishun. Yuv got a good hed—a hed fur sum thing grate—but yuv got the weeknes thats common tu yuth. From yur own a count I descuver yur all ready beset. That fine gentelman and grate pollytishun yur so taken with, wus as in diffrent tu yu as enny buddy until he sean yu had a hed. Then it wus esy enuf fur him tu be plesunt. Its thare weigh. Now I dont a cuse him ov meenin yu enny harm, but he dont meen yu enny good. Hees simply wurkin in sum maner fur him self—not fur yu. Pollytishuns is all a like. Thay need wachin.

I dont meen tu tel yu tu be distrustfull, or tu refuse enny kindnes. I dont pertend tu tel yu wat tu dew. Yuv got tu be yur own judge and gide. I meen simply that yu cant now be two carefull. Yuv reeched the most risky pint in yur carrear. Its the pint whare most yung men loose thare heds, and then it dusnt take long fur thare feet tu foller. Ganin a foothold yuv found a hard biznes, but loosin it yul find tu be esy enuf. Wons uphil—tothers downhil.

I dont say all this be cos I dout yu, but be cos I luv yu. Yur more to me, Clint, than a sun. Im but a plane, blunt man with leetle larning, but my harts all rite. Oh, if yu wus tu cum tu harm, it woud a most kill me ! But thare, Iv giv yu the longest leter I ever rit in my hole life. Thats the pruff ov my feelin fur yu.

Poly sends her luv now, and ses sheel send yu sum more shurts and stocins sune. Shees in high fether—Poly is—be cos she tuck yur cide on the New York queston. I tel her tu wate be fore crowin.

Dont furgit yur promis, Clint, what evr cums. Yur to rite me at unst, shud yu git into enny scrape—enny trubble yu cant sea

yur way cleen thru. And now may Heven wach over and bles yu, is the prarc ov

Yur luvin old unkle,

MARTIN SWARTWOUT.

CHAPTER V.

TWO POLITICIANS.

“My speech, daughter?”

“It is ready, father.”

“I knew it would be.”

The speakers were Barton Seacrist and his daughter Kate. They were seated on opposite sides of a richly carved table in a large, lofty, and elegant library; and, as they exchanged the words above quoted, the picture they made, both in expression and personnel, was striking and well worth a study. For that reason, as well as because they are to be prominent parties to the tale hereafter to be told, I shall take advantage of their present sitting to sketch them for the reader's information.

Imagine a head that has been skillfully cut from the finest and purest Italian marble, with the chin just a little overreaching the limit of perfect symmetry, and with a forehead narrow, but shapely, rising to correspond, giving a face long and sharp, but exquisitely chiselled; crown it with a slight cover of the finest and softest of silver-white hair, and then set it upon a tall and elegantly moulded person of rather delicate structure, and you have as accurate an idea of Barton Seacrist, physically, as any language I am able to use will convey. His complexion was

especially suggestive of a statue, being, as seen in his still, pale face, and one long and slender hand resting upon the table beside him, so clear, so entirely pallid, as to make the man seem absolutely bloodless.

So much without reference to the eye. That feature introduced and the whole aspect is changed. What before appeared lifeless and cold at once becomes instinct with animation and intelligence. It was a wonderful eye Barton Seacrist had—not large, not brilliant, but singularly clear and penetrating. It was a perfect index to the character of the man. A single glance at his countenance, when lit up by its accustomed expression, showed the shrewd, calculating, and plausible being he was—an old man, with all the beautiful outward insignia of advanced age, but upon whom you never thought of looking with reverence, because you saw how youthful and vigorous his spirit was. His eye, which had never grown old, told the story of the man's intellectual activity. Not that its glance was disagreeably incisive. A smile was the habitual expression of its wearer's countenance, sometimes sinister, but generally soft and winning. Altogether Barton Seacrist was, as far as physique went, a somewhat stately, but very charming, elderly gentleman.

His career had been considerably checkered, and was, altogether, extraordinary. In youth, being remarkably handsome, he had led a rather dissolute and useless life. In middle years he had grown ambitious, but was fickle and visionary, unsuccessfully trying his hand at a dozen dif-

ferent pursuits. When past the meridian of life he had accidentally entered into politics. It was his opportunity, and he grasped it with a resolute hand. The craft which had turned beneath so many others, burying them out of sight, and generally to their undoing, seemed strangely pliant to his pilotage. It bore him eventually to fortune. His rise had been astonishingly rapid.

It was not, as many supposed, the result of luck and chance. Barton Seacrist had been a lucky man where few, comparatively, succeed, because he had found his element. He was a born politician. To him the intrigues of a public life were labors of choice, if not of love, untiringly pursued; and the results, which often seemed accidental, flowed from the profoundest calculation. He toiled incessantly, and his promotion had been fairly earned, notwithstanding many supposed, from the apparent naturalness with which advantages fell to his lot, that they were not only without effort, but without solicitation, on his part. He knew better. He knew how controlling events had been brought about, and what days and nights of patient, but unseen, struggle they had cost. But at no period of his life had Barton Seacrist labored so unremittingly and craftily as at the time when he is first introduced to the readers of these pages.

At first, being poor, he had, at a seeming sacrifice, accepted an inferior office, and was content with moderate progress. No opportunity for advancement, however, was missed, notwithstanding he never appeared

ambitious. The secret of his success consisted in his ability to mask his real design. Office, although diligently sought after, and often the product of a long round of systematic plotting, always seemed to be forced upon him in the end. He constantly talked about retiring from public life, and was forever making pretended sacrifices in accepting position, to gratify his friends and party. He consequently made few enemies, and never unnecessarily. Rivals he inevitably had; but these he generally managed to humor along until in his own power or a position to be crushed, and then he was merciless. Adversaries he held it better to purchase with favors than to fight; but if a conflict was unavoidable he shrank not from the encounter, and he rarely had been worsted. He never lost his temper under defeat, seeming always to be more concerned on account of the disappointment to his friends than for himself. His fidelity to his party was proverbial. He never deserted it or its cause, whatever its fortunes. Caucus decisions, particularly when controlled by his own hand, were things that in his eyes were sacred. In fact, there is scarcely a winning point in which he did not display the true quality, if not of the model, at least of the successful, American politician.

But the clearest proof of Barton Seacrist's political capacity has not yet been touched upon. He accurately estimated the influence of gold as a political motor. He held that in politics, more than anywhere else, is money power. He never hesitated to use money in his political opera-

tions when the emergency demanded it. His highest sagacity was shown in deciding when, how, and to what extent it should be introduced. He neither wasted nor stinted his ammunition. But, while unchecked by any scruples as to its employment, his own hand was never detected in its use.

To provide himself with a means so potential in controlling men, singly or in masses, he wisely neglected no favorable occasion for increasing his private wealth. Not that he was niggardly in any of his dealings, nor parsimonious in his outlays. On the contrary, he was lavish to seeming extravagance—on occasions—and enjoyed the reputation of being not merely free-handed, but disinterested. He sometimes gave away the entire salary of an office to the poor of a doubtful political ward, and now and then subscribed munificently to a relief fund, made necessary by some great and startling calamity. Nor did his liberality stop there. When money was demanded by his party for party purposes, no man was more willing and prompt than he to respond.

In another respect he demonstrated his liberality. He was generous to himself. As his means increased, he steadily improved upon his former style of living; until, from a residence in one of the down-town wards, and on a street that was not very respectable even there, advancing step by step, he finally became the owner and occupant of one of the first mansions on one of the first avenues of the city. It was surprising to see how much this visible pro-

motion improved his standing with the better portion of the community.

But in all his pecuniary outlays there was a vein of the closest calculation. He expended money because it paid him to do so. He watched with equal vigilance the outgoing and the in-coming stream. He intended that the source of supply should always exceed the sum-total of outlay ; and in finance, as in politics, he made few miscalculations. The field in which he operated—New York city—was peculiarly suited to his ability. It afforded him unexampled opportunities for profitable speculation—to say nothing of alleged peculation. In a hundred ways there was money to be made where his influence or his knowledge was useful ; and, by a process that was never divulged, whenever money was made, he received a share. And yet he was never—at least openly—guilty of official malfeasance. No one pretended to explain how it was accomplished, but the result was transparent. He grew rapidly rich—very rich.

He belonged, of course, to the dominant party ; until, in time, it might more properly be said to belong to him. Having joined the political society of Tammany, he had become one of its Sachems ; and of the several hundred men who have held the position from the remote period of its organization, no one was ever credited with the exhibition of greater zeal and sagacity in the advancement of the two objects which the members of that powerful and venerable society pre-eminently have in view—themselves and their party.

Although now an old man—over sixty—he yet labored with an assiduity that was perfectly untiring. He did seriously think of abandoning public life—but it was after certain “points,” which were clearly defined in his own mind, had been made. There were to be gathered a few more sheaves to crown the harvest of his political life, and then he would be content to rest.

Barton Seacrist was a widower, whose deceased wife had been dead for a number of years. His family, at the time that he is introduced to the reader’s notice, consisted of himself, his daughter Kate, the younger child, and a son, of whom more hereafter.

One difficulty Barton Seacrist had keenly felt after his rise in public life. That was the lack of early education. Speeches had to be made and documents written for the public eye ; and he knew that he was in constant danger of saying something that might make him ridiculous—of a blunder worse than a crime. Assistants he could employ, but he needed a confidant as well as an assistant—some one on whose discretion and fidelity he could absolutely rely. Such an assistant he had found in his daughter. She filled a place which no stranger could supply.

Physically, Kate Seacrist was a literal copy of her father, although reproduced upon a much smaller scale. She was slight—even petite in form. She had the same clear, sharp cut features, the same positive chin, high forehead, vivid eye, hueless complexion, and hair of a deep, glossy blackness, such as his had

once been. She was not ordinarily beautiful. Her face, although full of character, and always interesting, seemed too long for her almost diminutive person, and her eye, while intense in its expression, had, in repose, a certain tone of seriousness, not to say of severity, which deprived her countenance of her father's characteristic smile. But more of a drawback than anything else was her complexion, or rather want of complexion, which, although harmonizing with her father's snowy hair and multiplied years, in contrast with her raven tresses and equally youthful eye, imparted a pallor and shadowiness to her countenance that were almost startling. And yet there were times when Kate Seacrist was singularly beautiful. When any unusual excitement had called the rich blood to her cheeks, or her natural paleness had succumbed to those artificial helps which her sex has not disdained to employ, she was capable of giving to her features a demeanor that was almost irresistible in its fascination. Her face could light up most wonderfully.

But mentally, Kate Seacrist was even more pronounced her father's counterpart. She possessed the same energy of will, the same fondness for intrigue, the same abundance of resource. She loved her father tenderly, unselfishly—doted upon his success—and was a party to all his schemes. He consulted her in everything, and trusted her judgment almost as much as his own. It was a rare, powerful combination. An old man and a young girl working as one person, governed a great city.

What he most lacked—the polish and facility of early training—she supplied. She wrote his speeches, addresses and public correspondence, and, fully infused with his views, confidently indited leading articles for such journals as were in his interest or pay, that were accepted by his followers as unquestionable authority—and did it all with a keen and perfect relish—did it unostentatiously, and with no desire to be personally known. The truth is, she was as much of a born politician as her father, and had it been her lot to enter the world a century later, by which time it is fair to presume that her sex will have accorded to it those civil privileges for which its more advanced members are working, she would doubtless gain a position fully as exalted as that to which her father had risen. Possessed of the same instincts and aspirations, in her, if the writer does not misinterpret the shadows of coming events, the reader will find illustrated in their united strength and weakness the qualities that are to belong to the future feminine ruler of the State.

“It is ready, father!”

With those words Kate Seacrist took from her pocket a small silver-mounted key, and, opening a drawer by her side, removed from it several half sheets of closely-written manuscript. These she handed across the table to her father. Taking them up one by one, he began the task of their examination, while she sat silent and constrained, her eyes fixed upon her father's countenance with such a look of absorbing wist-

fulness as showed how solicitous she was for his approval of her work.

Barton Seacrist read on in silence, laying down page after page as he proceeded, until, entering upon a paragraph which seemed to be especially gratifying, he dropped his reserve and began to read aloud :

"The first great office of political—or, perhaps more properly speaking—of practical Democracy, is to assert the just claims of what are called 'the lower classes.' The rich and powerful are in no need of defenders. Constituting what has always been the ruling class, they have never shown any backwardness in protecting their own interests, even when those of other portions of the community have—as has too often been the case—suffered from neglect. It requires the exercise of very little patriotism and statesmanship to vindicate their rights. But, when we come to the subordinate—not to say inferior—grades of society, a widely different and vastly superior qualification is demanded. It requires a higher, not lower, order of statesmanship to properly calculate and champion the claims of the poor and neglected. It is a quality most rare, and exalted as rare, which we find making a party the defender of the defenceless, the friend of the friendless.

"What folly to suppose that we can dispense with even the lowest of our social classes, or what is practically the same thing, leave it uncared for! It is the beauty of our political system that it acknowledges no superiority among men. It recognizes all as equals, and, in its

practical working, gives each his place and function. No part of the mechanism is neglected. Every portion has its office, and its due performance is indispensable to the successful operation of the whole. It is not the great wheel or the ponderous roller that spins the thread or weaves the texture. The smallest buzzing member of the mighty combination, that seems but an accident amid its thunderous neighbors, and the insignificant spindle that sings unnoticed at its task, is each a party—a necessary party—to the grand achievement."

"Well said! well said, Kate!" enthusiastically exclaimed the old man at this point, turning his eyes from the manuscript to his daughter. "You have caught my idea exactly. We must stoop to and tickle the lower classes if we would rise ourselves. That's the secret of success in New York politics. It's not respectability that's politically uppermost here, or, for that matter, ever will be. New York is governed from below—not from above. The rabble are our masters, and, if we are to have power, we must get it from them. They must be conciliated at every risk. No difference how aristocratic we aim to become ourselves—socially, and all that, we must never lose sight of the fact that our political fortunes have their only sure foundation on the lower strata.

"But—" and there was a moment's pause, perhaps of hesitation, in which the speaker's countenance put on the blandest of its characteristic smiles—"But, would it not be well—I mean simply as a matter of

policy at that point, to say something about ourselves, something about our own humble origin ; how we started from the people ? It would be a point in our favor with the masses."

"I think," coldly replied Kate, "we can leave our enemies to speak of that ; they are not likely to forget our humble origin."

There was unmistakable sarcasm in the words ; Barton Seacrist noticed it, and felt it.

"You don't mean, do you, Kate," he asked, "that anybody on the Avenue has been disrespectful, because we are—are new-comers?"

"I don't mean," replied the girl, "that anybody has said anything. I would not like to say so much for their thoughts."

"Pooh! pooh!" replied the old man gaily ; "who cares for their thoughts? It's money that governs the Avenue—not blood—and as long as we have plenty of money, we'll be respected, if we did make it by politics, and a little faster than the rest of them—particularly," he added, after a momentary pause, "if we succeed in making those points we were discussing."

To this sally Kate Seacrist, upon whose brow a shade had settled, made no reply, and her father resumed the reading of the speech she had prepared for him, and which was intended for a meeting of his party, soon to take place.

"It will read well in the *Herald*," he remarked approvingly, when the document was finished. Then springing up—for he was still an agile man—he skipped round the table to

where his daughter sat, put his arms about her neck, and imprinted a kiss upon her lips.

The shade instantly fled Kate Seacrist's brow. Her eyes looked up lovingly into those of the old man bending devotedly and gallantly over her, for Barton Seacrist's manner was gallantry itself. As politicians both knew how to flatter and dissemble ; but there could be no question as to the sincerity of the affection that was manifested there.

"Ah, Kate, you're a treasure!" exclaimed Barton Seacrist earnestly. "Had you been but a boy! Had my boy been but like you!"

"Now, father, don't speak of brother again in that way, I beg of you," said the girl almost piteously, as she noted the look, half of sorrow and half of anger, that took the place of the smile on her father's face. "Gordon may change—grow steady. He is young yet—only two years older than I am."

Then, seeing that the frown she wished to dispel still remained, she changed her tactics, adding hurriedly :

"Oh, father, I forgot to tell you that I had sent round a leader for the *Rocket* preparatory to your speech. I thought you would like to have something said in advance."

"Thanks! daughter, thanks! you foresee everything."

"Thanks!" he again added. "But there is another thing—a trifle—I might as well speak of. I have given the members of the Thunderbolt Hose Company a new uniform, and their leader a new trumpet. They intend serenading me to-night. The

reporters will be present, and something will have to be said—not much—something complimentary—an acknowledgment of the honor and—and—so forth—you understand.”

“I shall have something ready for you.”

“Thank you!”

For a few seconds neither spoke.

“There is another matter, Kate.”

“Something about the new German newspaper?”

“No, daughter; I don’t mean that.”

Whatever it was, the girl’s tranquil countenance showed that she anticipated nothing very important.

“You’ll have to throw Beverly Matson over, Kate.”

“Throw Beverly Matson over, father?” exclaimed the girl with a start and a look of unaffected surprise.

“Yes, Kate. I’ve won’t answer—is hardly up to the mark—particularly if we make all our points. You’ll have to throw Beverly Matson over.”

“But, father, his family is——”

“Only second rate.”

“And he is——”

“Nobody.”

“But consider, father. Recollect this is my third engagement since—since we got up—and there was an affair before.”

“Oh that was before the flood!”

“That’s the trouble, father. The flood is getting into the ebb. I am twenty-six.”

“And I am sixty-three. What’s to become of my market?”

The cheery laugh with which this was said, was worth more in a dis-

cussion of that sort than a whole quiver of the sharpest arguments.

“Very well, father! It shall be as you say; but remember the danger. Procrastination——”

“Never fear, daughter! Never fear! If we only make our points, there’s not a family in New York that won’t be proud of an alliance with us. But, while on the subject of young men, in court the other day—I had gone there to bail some of our men who had got into difficulty; they’re always getting into difficulty, but we can’t do without them for all that—I met a remarkably bright young fellow—fresh from the country—a stranger here. He handled himself exceedingly well, and, having a talk with him a day or so afterwards, I was very much pleased with him. I thought of inviting him to the next dinner party we give our friends. Pay him some attention, Kate. He’ll appreciate the favor, and, if I’m not greatly mistaken, is worth securing for our side. Bain—Gain—Wain—I have his card somewhere—Maintland’s the name—remember, Clinton Maintland. But I must be going. I’m to meet a committee of the Journeymen Horse-Shoe Makers’ Association this morning. It’s an organization that must be looked after closely—closely. Good morning, dear!”

And Barton Seacrist, having kissed his daughter again, walked briskly out of the room.

Kate sat at the table, with an unusually sober expression of countenance for a long time after her father was gone, without word or motion. Then she took a pen in her

hand, and spread out some clear white paper before her ; but still she did not write.

"Well, I suppose it must be so," she at last began speaking to herself with a sigh, "although I liked Beverly Matson. He is certainly good-looking, if not altogether our equal now. Yes, I could have liked Beverly almost—almost as well as—Poor Robert! I wonder what has become of him. A carpenter still, I suppose—married—with a family of children—probably. That's always the way with those low people—they marry—have families of children—but—but—let me see—it's the Thunderbolt Hose Company—Friends and Fellow-Citizens—Deeply sensible of the honor you confer, I cannot permit you to return to your homes without an expression of the gratitude and pleasure I feel."

The last sentence was committed to paper, for Kate's soliloquy had lapsed into the speech she was about to prepare for her father. Her pen, when once the task was undertaken, ran on rapidly and uninterruptedly ; and in a few minutes the work was done. The manuscript was deposited in the table drawer, the key turned in the lock, and then consigned to her pocket.

Then rising and stationing herself before a large and elegant pier-glass, she stood silently contemplating her own image for a considerable time. The picture was by no means a flattering one. Her ashy-pale cheeks and slight, somewhat shrunken limbs and skinny features, made more noticeable by the dishabille of a morning dress carelessly assumed

for her day's labors, not only gave her the air of a person wasted by over-tax of body or mind, but conveyed the impression of an age even beyond the one she had mentioned. From the shadow resting upon her brow it was evident that she derived no satisfaction from the survey. The longer she retained her position, the deeper grew the frown of vexation with which she regarded herself. At last, turning petulantly away, she touched a silver bell upon the table at which she had been writing—then resumed her place before the glass.

"How old do I look?" she asked rather sharply of a bustling French waiting woman—her dressing maid—who appeared in answer to the summons.

"About tween-tee I should say," answered Mademoiselle Cathron with a simpering smile.

"Tween-tee, pshaw!" responded Kate. "Don't you see that wrinkle there?"

She pressed her finger to her forehead at the suspected point.

"Nay! nay! no wreen-keel yet. Only—what do you call him?—a line—a trace—a shade. We must rub him out—so eas-ee."

"What I need is color—more color," observed Kate.

"Me-es is certainly a lee-teel pale."

"Then get your cosmetics and go to work."

An hour later, as Kate Seacrist swept forth to her carriage in full afternoon dress for a drive in the Park, her sparkling, rosy cheeks, her bright, fresh complexion, and her

small, but full and elegantly rounded person, would have convinced any beholder that her age was on the sunny side of twenty. Such a miracle had art achieved in that short time.

CHAPTER VI.

ONLY A FEW FRIENDS.

CLINTON MAINTLAND's triumph, of which, in the first flush of natural exultation, he had written his uncle so enthusiastically, was followed by a very reasonable, but on that account no less trying season of depression. It was a shower he had enjoyed—a golden shower, it was true—not a steady rain. He had produced a sensation; but all sensations are transitory, and especially so in the ceaseless surge and tumult of a great city. A man may be famous there to-day, and utterly forgotten to-morrow.

Clinton was still in great measure a stranger, and business was slow to come; and what did come was far from remunerative. The days that followed what he had pronounced "his success," failed to make any considerable addition to his resources. On the contrary, they made heavy draughts upon them. With money once more in his pocket, he had given way to certain extravagances that were entirely natural, but, under the circumstances, hardly prudent. He had discovered that his country-made garments were not altogether in style. A successful lawyer ought at least to be in the fashion, and as a consequence, a new

suit was ordered. He had taken an office on a lower floor, but at a higher rent. He had sought out a boarding-house, which, without being exactly first-class, was expensive. The result of all this was, that before many days had gone round without bringing anything that was especially encouraging, he had begun once more somewhat dubiously to consider the possibility of empty pockets.

In no very pleasant mood he was one day employed in meditating upon the prospect before him, when a large, official-looking envelope was placed in his hand. Eagerly opening it, he read the following:

MY DEAR SIR: After the comparison we have had of our political views, and learning what I have of the valuable and unrequited services rendered by your respected father to our common party, I take the liberty of sending you, without consultation, a commission as Attorney to the — Commission. The salary is not large—one hundred dollars per month—and the labor at times will be considerable; but I would advise the acceptance of the trust.

At the same time, should your engagements permit, I would request the pleasure of your company at my residence to-morrow evening, when I expect a party of gentlemen to dine with me, *only a few friends*. Dinner to be served at eight.

Very truly your friend,

BARTON SEACREST.

To Clinton Maintland, Esq.

The accompanying commission, which bore the broad seal of the city of New York, was, as might have been expected, a most timely and welcome arrival; but the communication itself excited conflicting emotions. Nothing could have been more grateful to Clinton than the

compliment conveyed—not even the kindness which drove a haunting spectre from his path. But the invitation to the Seacrist residence was not without its terrors. He had more than once looked at the imposing up-town mansion of the great sachem from a respectful distance, with feelings of the profoundest awe forming vague pictures of the possible splendors within. So far, he had made no attempt to enter city society, and all its fashionable state and ceremony were, in consequence, still a dim and vexing mystery. The circumstances under which he was now called upon to penetrate it, were especially embarrassing. The gentlemen he would meet—"a few friends"—would doubtless be the most distinguished and elegant the metropolis afforded. And then Kate Seacrist, of whose beauty and accomplishments he had heard so much—for everything appertaining to that family was of deep interest to him—but whom he had never seen, would be there. The thought almost took his breath away. Nevertheless, the emergency had to be met. He at least congratulated himself on his new clothes, about which he had had his misgivings. Now his regret was that he had not made them the occasion of a more liberal outlay.

More than one of my readers knows experimentally through what tribulations my hero passed in reaching the scene of his first city dinner-party—the long and veritable purgatory of anticipation—the doubts and agonies concerning dress—the fears and perils of the way—especially if,

in approaching the place of operations, a conveyance of the people's line is patronized, into which persons of all descriptions will persist in crowding and seating themselves without regard to their neighbors' wardrobe—the walk of the last block, undertaken on purpose to see if everything is in exact order, and then the awful plunge into the dreadful glare within, worse, infinitely, than a leap into the coldest of cold water.

Fortunately for Clinton, he was met on his entrance by the head of the house, who warmly seized his hand and gave him a most cordial greeting.

"Glad to see you, Mr. Faintland; walk in and make yourself at home—perfectly at home—only a few friends. This is Mr. Scratchal, of the *Rocket*. He knows everybody, and will point out the lions. Mr. Scratchal, this is my friend Mr. Paintland."

And while Barton Seacrist hurried away to welcome the next comer, Clinton was conscious of bowing in a confused sort of way to the man who supported the dignity of that well-known journal, the *Rocket*.

Everything, for the first few moments, was a crush of light and lustre, the radiance that beamed and streamed from a bewildering profusion of golden decoration which even the country-raised youth, in a short time, could not help feeling to be over-elaborate and oppressive.

His first impression of the men by whom he found himself surrounded, when he had sufficiently accustomed himself to the brilliant apartments to begin the study of details, was

one of surprise, if not of disappointment. They, somehow, did not have that distinguished bearing he had expected to see. They lolled in their seats, and their voices sounded strangely loud and unmusical. One or two expressions reached his ears which he could scarcely believe possible in such a place. In the distance were two or three female figures of which he could at first form no very definite idea.

Mr. Scratchal was a young man, with a sunken chest, hollow cheeks, deep-set eyes, a husky voice, and very red hair and moustache; but he was friendly and inclined to be communicative.

"That man with the large nose and heavy beard is Alderman Skipp. He is the owner of Lady Jane."

"Of ——"

"The fastest stepper on the Lane. Not much on horse, hey?"

Clinton confessed his ignorance in that department of zoology.

"We of the *Rocket* have to know everything—everything, from horses to preachers."

And the man of encyclopedical information laughed a short, hollow laugh.

"The big man he is talking to," he resumed, "is Grulls. You know all about Grulls."

"I believe not."

"The great liquor man; has places in the Bowery, in Houston, in Cherry, in the Five Points—all over the city. Is said to have cleared a million last year."

"I wouldn't mind goin you a thousan on my mare agin your trotters eny day you'll bring 'em out.

D—n me, how's that for high?" unctiously exclaimed the owner of Lady Jane.

"It's my money," confidently responded Grulls.

Whereupon the gentlemen smiled characteristically.

"What are those men doing here?" asked Clinton, with a look of undisguised amazement.

"Doing here?" repeated the *Rocket's* representative, with equal astonishment in his cavernous eyes at such a question.

"Oh, I see! You're new in town. Not posted yet. Well, I'll tell you: We of the *Rocket* understand it all. They're here because Barton Seacrist needs them. They control votes. That's the reason. If they didn't, Seacrist wouldn't have them about, you may depend on it. He's wonderful sharp—knows his men every time. It doesn't make much difference to him what the man is, so that he's useful. Seacrist ain't a-going to have anybody about him that he hasn't got use for. He don't keep any dead-heads. What you're intended for I don't know, and I guess you don't yet; but you'll find out in time. These gatherings are all political. There's nobody here but politicians. Everything that Seacrist does is political, and it means something. There's something in the wind now, you may depend on it. We'll see the point before the affair is over."

As Clinton made no reply, being too much taken aback by the statements to which he had just listened, and which he was disposed to regard as exaggerated at least, to have any-

thing to say. Scratchal went on with the list of notables present.

"That tall man with the very red face, is Senator Bloom. He's a Tammany Sachem, a Seacrist man, and has a rich place in the Court House."

"And that pleasant, gentlemanly man with whom he is conversing?"

"Oh, that's Smooth—Cinnamon Smooth."

"What, the great Radical leader?"

"The same."

"At such a gathering?—I'm surprised."

"Wouldn't be surprised at all, if you only knew what we of the *Rocket* know. Smooth has some of the fattest contracts under the city government."

"And the two men with their heads together just beyond?"

"Padding—nothing but padding. They hold city sinecures—places from which they draw salary and where somebody else does the work. Their business is at primaries and elections."

"But there's a man worth looking at—that little man just beyond," continued the persistent journalist. "That's Scourge, of the *Sunday Plague*; and, I tell you, he's a stinger. He's been a party to more libels than any other man in New York. He's been horsewhipped, and knocked down, and trampled upon in the street, I don't know how many times. Any other man would have been dead. Oh, he's a desperate one—Scourge is. You had better take a good look at him."

Clinton did take a good look at him, but saw nothing extraordinary

—only a man of insignificant frame, with pointed features and a very cold eye, sitting off silently and moodily by himself—so that he suffered his eyes to wander on until they rested upon a group of persons collected about an individual who was talking volubly—sometimes sitting down and sometimes on his feet—and who was clearly a centre of attraction.

"Who is that over there, with all those people about him? That noisy, conceited, fidgety——"

"Why, don't you know who that is? That's Windsham."

Clinton was astonished. He knew all about Windsham—the great Windsham. Nor was he the only one thus favored. The public generally knew Windsham. He gave it abundant opportunity to do so. There had for years been scarcely a notable demonstration in New York—it made but little difference to what end—in which he had not been conspicuous. No meeting of the people was complete until he had had something to say. He had appeared in many roles, and had filled them all with satisfaction to others—and to himself, as they had increased his notoriety. He had been a professor of many doctrines, and a doctor of many professions. Law, medicine, and divinity were equally suited to his hands, and had employed them by turns. He was poet, philosopher, philanthropist, and demagogue. And in all his occupations he did everything so well that he invariably reached a point just a little below excellence. The only thing in which he failed was the one thing for which he chiefly sought a reputation—wit.

He jested so inevitably, and sometimes so execrably, that the public always laughed when he appeared before it—if not at his jokes, at himself. But while he did many things creditably, he got credit for more things which he did not do. Every jest, every epigram, every suggestion, which nobody else would acknowledge, was carried to his account. He could wear any skin. Whatever was of unknown parentage, was said to be Windshamistic.

Of course he was a politician; and, with the same versatility he had shown elsewhere, he had gone the entire round of the parties. Having gained no secure footing anywhere, his career threatened to end in total failure, when, as a last resort, he had attached himself to the fortunes of Barton Seacrist. The combination was profitable to both. Windsham's fluency—not to say flippancy—of tongue and pen—his audacity and his dash—made him most valuable as an instrument in the hands of a man like Seacrist. The consequence was that the two had become almost inseparable—the public even supposed there was a bond of affection between them—and had prospered together. Seacrist secured Windsham's loyalty by giving him abundant opportunities to advance his interests and gratify his vanity; and Windsham returned the favor by an untiring, almost slavish, devotion to his patron's schemes. Otherwise there was not even confidence between them.

Clinton Maintland, with the proneness of youth to accept cleverness for genius and notoriety for fame,

had formed an exalted opinion of the man he was then beholding. In his stilted commonplaces he had seen what he believed to be the declarations of true greatness. His highest ambition had been to become another Windsham.

He now saw before him a tall and sinewy man with a pinched and puckered face—wholly whiskerless—of such muscular activity that it could not possibly keep still. It was constantly changing its expression by the shutting of the eye, the pouting of a lip, or some other equally outré manifestation which seemed intended to assist in the delivery of an endless flow of words. The eye was small, bright, and cunning. The face was sallow; the hair a sandy tissue, long, limp, and irregular, and just touched with grey. There was abundance of meaning in the countenance; but its changes were so frequent and confusing—so compounded of intelligence and grimace—that it was impossible to determine what was its prevailing cast.

So puzzled was Clinton in deciding which feature was the index to the man's supposed greatness, that he heard not a word of his companion's remarks on two or three local celebrities that in their turn engaged his attention.

"Ah, there's the one to interest you!"

So much emphasis did Scratchal lay upon the words, that Clinton's attention was at once turned to the person indicated.

"The one, I mean, talking to the lady in white."

The person referred to was Wind-

sham's opposite in every particular. He was a heavy, though not particularly tall, man, with a great, massive head, on which was piled a shock of coarse black hair, connecting with a suit of equally sombre whiskers that swept completely round the chin. Within this ebony frame was a broad, compact, and sensual, but by no means uninteresting, face. It was the infallible cynosure to a strong, clear intellect, a resolute, even stubborn will, a measure of reserve amounting almost to moroseness, and a combination of the most powerful human passions. The eyes were large, but retained a shadow of sullenness, even as they looked steadily and admiringly into the face of a small, elegant, and sprightly female with whom their possessor was conversing.

Scratchal was not mistaken in supposing that he was calling attention to one in whom his companion would be interested. Clinton forgot all about Windsham as he gazed upon the strong, burly individual just described—or rather, upon him and his neighbor; for the slight, elegant, and, in her airy vestments, seemingly almost ethereal creature, with whom he was holding converse, and that great man with his eye upon her, keeping her apparently by some magnetic connection from flitting away as the dancing buoy is held by the anchor deep down below, made a tableau well worth his study.

"A most wonderful man, I tell you—a regular phenomenon," rattled on the *Rocket* man, without in the least realizing his companion's medita-

tions. "There is no one in New York——"

"Who is he?"

"Abel Cummager."

Clinton gave a start. He knew Abel Cummager perfectly by reputation—knew him as the most extensive, the most successful, and the most dangerous panderer to the follies of the young and dissolute in New York. His gambling hells were the scandal of the city; and had been the means of dragging thousands down to ruin.

"A most extraordinary character, I assure you," persisted Scratchal. "He has never met his equal, when a half million was at stake. He is just as cool, just as deliberate, as if the amount wasn't more than so many farthings."

"But what brings him here?"

"Politics. Don't you know that Cummager is the leader of the Mohicans, as Seacrist is of Tammany? They are looked upon as the two best politicians in New York."

"But I thought that Tammany and the Mohicans, although belonging to the same national party, were bitterly hostile to each other."

"So they are; but it's Barton Seacrist's tactics to consort with those seemingly opposed to him. He never has a gathering of his friends, but some of his so-called enemies are present. We of the *Rocket* understand it perfectly."

And the little man again laughed at his own wit and penetration.

"But is Abel Cummager untrue to the organization of which he is the reputed head?"

"Not at all. He has several times

defeated Tammany, in spite of Barton Seacrist's most elaborate preparations."

"Can there be any business connection?"

"None. Barton Seacrist is a man who risks nothing unnecessarily. Abel Cummager risks everything."

"Then, what can be the link between them?"

"That is the one thing which we of the *Rocket* can't decide. We have had to give up the point."

"Is he—Abel Cummager, I mean—married?"

"Yes—no. He has a wife, but doesn't live with her. There is some talk of a divorce."

The longer Clinton watched the two people conversing so familiarly together, the more interested, and at the same time the more dissatisfied, he became. There was something about the appearance of the girl—for she did not look to be over twenty—which seemed to him to be peculiarly engaging. She was not merely bright and beautiful; but, in her snowy evening costume, she had about her an air of unsuspecting innocence and purity—and there she was in close communication with Abel Cummager.

"Who is she?" he at last inquired, with sudden emphasis.

"She!" exclaimed Scratchal, who had, meanwhile, been babbling about half a dozen other parties, and was then busily expatiating upon the points, strong and weak, of a great bearded lawyer on the opposite side of the room. "What she?"

"The angel there by the side of that devil—Abel Cummager."

"Why, don't you know? That is Miss Seacrist."

What farther meditations Clinton Mainland might have been tempted to indulge on the strength of this additional information, were here prevented by a man of extremely gross demeanor and offensive bearing, who came swaggering towards the point where he was sitting, and who excited some attention by the freedom and boisterousness of his remarks.

"Who is he?" asked Clinton, with a look of disgust.

"The worst man in New York—Dennis Hargate."

Clinton did not need any further enlightenment on the character of the man before him. His deeds were entirely too notorious to have escaped his knowledge. The keeper of a low drinking place in one of the worst quarters of the city, his den was the resort of a desperate class of ruffians, in whose exploits he had frequently taken a leading part. Although often arrested for his lawless acts, Hargate had, in some unexplained manner, always managed to escape punishment. His gang was recognized as the terror of law-abiding people.

"Hargate—is it possible that he is here?"

"And why not? He controls more votes than any other man in the city, and has always been true to Tammany—has saved it the day more than once when the election was over."

"How is that?"

"Simply by smashing the boxes containing the opposition majorities.

I'm sure there's nothing so remarkable in that."

But, by this time, the subject of Scratchal's comments, having paused long enough to pass, in his familiar way, a complimentary observation or two with Skipp and Grulls, had reached the point where our friends were seated. Here his eye fell upon Clinton, who, as a stranger, at once arrested his attention.

"Ah! who have we here?" he exclaimed in a rude, insolent tone, coolly staring our hero in the face.

Scratchal promptly arose and introduced Clinton as Mr. Saintland.

"Saintland!" repeated Hargate, with a coarse laugh. "A pretty crowd for the saints to be found in. What political party, Mr. Saint-what-ever-you-call-yourself, do you belong to?"

"I belong to myself," calmly replied Clinton, disinclined to any familiarity with the ruffian.

"Ah! disposed to be sharp, are you?—need taking down a peg or two. See here, Mr. Jack-en-apes, do you know who you're talking to?"

"I should infer, from what I have heard of the history of Dennis Hargate, that I am talking to about the greatest criminal in New York."

Hargate's countenance for an instant was as black as night. Then, quickly breaking out into what was nearer a roar than a laugh, he exclaimed :

"Pretty good for a greenhorn, I'll swear! Here, Mr. Saint-whatever-you-are, here's my hand."

Clinton had risen to his feet, and was still standing. Although controlling his temper, he was thorough-

ly incensed. He therefore coolly looked down upon the member Hargate extended towards him, without making any movement to accept it.

"What!" exclaimed Hargate with an oath, as all the evil fires of his nature again flashed into his face, "Won't shake hands? Then, my suckling, if you won't take my open hand, you shall have it shut!" and he drew back to strike.

The ruffian had met his match in courage, and more than his match in strength and self-possession. Without moving an inch, Clinton instantly put himself in a posture of defence, and looked calmly down upon his adversary, for he was the taller man of the two.

Hargate, as he met Clinton's eye, instinctively recognized his own inferiority, and hesitated to strike. His indecision was fatal to his purpose. Before he had recovered his resolution, the hand of Barton Seacrist—for by this time the altercation had attracted the attention of every one present—was laid upon his shoulder, and the sachem's voice hissed in his ear :

"Back—instantly back I say! How dare you, in my house!"

Had Hargate been a dog and Seacrist his master, the great, burly ruffian could not have more quickly succumbed to the voice of that physically feeble old man. His countenance fell, his fist relaxed its tension and he shrunk away, seating himself moodily in a remote part of the room.

As for Clinton, I have already described his splendid physical and

facial development, but never before had he appeared so magnificent as at that moment he stood the centre of attraction to every eye in the apartment. His triumph could not have been more complete. And yet it was destined to a sudden abatement, for just then, as he glanced about him, his eyes suddenly encountered the large and sparkling orbs of Kate Seacrist—the same he had been admiring at a distance—now but a few steps from him. Although the glance they gave him was far from one of displeasure, he instantly colored with embarrassment, and his eyes sank in visible confusion.

Kate whispered a word in her father's ear, and the next moment was by him formally introduced to Clinton—the latter as Mr. Shaintland.

"I have heard my father speak of Mr. Maintland so often that I have long desired this pleasure," said Kate, with a smile and a tone of voice that would have been most grateful to Clinton, even if the correct pronunciation of his name had not carried the confirmation of her words.

Clinton stammered something in reply—he hardly knew what.

"As dinner has been announced, Mr. Maintland," calmly remarked Kate, "I shall be happy to show you the way."

Had not Clinton been utterly bewildered, he would at once have responded to such a distinct intimation; but before he could sufficiently rally his senses to command himself, Abel Cummager had presented his arm to Miss Seacrist, and tri-

umphantly led her to the dining apartment.

But laggard in gallantry as he had proved, Clinton did not pass out of the young lady's memory. When seated at the table, she put her hand upon the back of a vacant chair next to her, the one upon the other side being occupied by Cummager, and, as Clinton approached, she smilingly signified with upraised finger that he should occupy it. With a flushed brow and a rapidly beating heart, he accepted the place.

The dinner and the dinner talk were what might have been expected. Alderman Skipp related some wonderful exploits of Lady Jane, and Grulls sang the praises of his trotters. Both were made happy in the end by the wager of another "thousan" on their respective roadsters. Cinnamon Smooth said some very pleasant things in the way of small talk. He was a most amiable man. Scourge hissed a few cutting remarks, which were accepted by all present as seasoning to the salad. As to the parties who had been described as "padding—nothing but padding," they padded themselves to most excellent purpose. But the life of the table was Windsham, who scintillated at a most wonderful rate, saying very many things which kept the company in good humor, some of which were brilliant, and more of which were silly. As for Barton Seacrist, he proved himself a most accomplished entertainer, noticing everybody, agreeing with everybody, and making everybody feel perfectly at home.

But the whole of it, whether con-

sisting of wise things or foolish things, sour things or amiable things, was a blank to Clinton. He had ears but for one person at the table—his clever little neighbor, who, taking advantage of the taciturnity of her attendant on the other hand, devoted herself so successfully to the amusement of her new acquaintance, that he was speedily convinced she was the most beautiful, accomplished and agreeable person he had ever met. And when, as at an early hour they did, Kate and the other ladies—three or four in number, who were introduced simply for propriety's sake—retired, he was left in a state of most absorbing, but delicious, mystification.

Then came the toasts. Alderman Skipp responded for the City Government, although Windsham, who was a licensed punster on all such occasions, suggested that that was a subject that had better be Skipped. He did not get a good start, and floundered fearfully, until, in his confusion, he stumbled upon a horse simile, when he went ahead in triumph. With their host for groom and Windsham for jockey, he had no doubt they would all arrive safely under the string by a head—(“A fearful figure!” from Windsham,)—and that Tammany would sweep the stakes. He concluded amid great applause.

Grulls, the great liquor dealer, spoke for the commercial interests. His sales had been much larger during the preceding twelve months than ever before, and he thought the country was on the highway to prosperity—a result he attributed largely

to the wisdom of the administration of which their host was a member. As he concluded, Windsham suggested that he took a wine-colored view of the subject.

Cinnamon Smooth talked benevolently about an era of good feeling, and sat down after creating the impression on all present that it was an excellent thing to have him among them. Windsham said his remarks had a delicious flavor.

Senator Bloom, being called upon, sang a song which Windsham declared was the flower of the occasion, being “the nosegay of a perpetual bloomer”—the sentiment and appropriateness of which can be inferred from the chorus, which was as follows :

Oh, what is the use of a public-fed goose,

If we, the elected, are doomed to starvation?

Then let us sing truce to all party abuse,

And agree to divide the municipal ration.

Scourge, of the *Sunday Plague*, in speaking for the Press, scattered some ugly shafts about ; but by that time the wine had so far mellowed all hearts that the sting was not felt.

The men of padding applauded everything most lustily.

The evening was well spent when Barton Seacrist arose and entered upon a very pleasant and cunningly worded speech, the substance of which was that he loved all members of the great Conservative family, whether they belonged to what might be called his own household or not—that there had unfortunately been divisions in the party which had re-

sulted in disaster ; but he sincerely hoped that an era of concord was approaching ; and he would, therefore, embrace that auspicious occasion to declare his high esteem for a most worthy and patriotic body of Conservative citizens with which he had formerly differed, and of which a distinguished representative was then present—the Molicans.

Instantly all eyes were turned to where Abel Cummager was supposed to be sitting—but his chair was vacant. He had just joined the ladies at their music, having retired so quietly that no one had noticed his departure.

With a shade of chagrin which he could not wholly conceal, Barton Seacrist discovered the unexpected vacancy ; but at the same instant his eyes fell upon Clinton Maintland, who was sitting next beyond, and with ready tact he changed the line of his discourse by remarking that he saw before him a representative of one of the leading professions—the law—who, he had no doubt, was destined to do honor to himself, his calling, and the political party to which he belonged. He would introduce to his friends a rising young Conservative, Mr. Starryland.

“Starryland!” said Windsham, “by all means let us hear from Starryland!”

Clinton, who had been in a brown study since Kate Seacrist’s departure, caring nothing for the half-maudlin proceedings about him, was taken completely by surprise at the mention of what he knew to be intended for his name. It was however necessary that he should say

something in response to so flattering a notice ; and he succeeded in giving expression to some generalities, which secured him, when he took his seat, a round of applause from every one present except Hargate, who, sitting at a distant part of the table, glared upon him with a scowl of the fiercest and most unrelenting hate.

But now came the event of the evening, showing, as it did, what, in the language Scratchal had employed, “was in the wind.” Windsham, being called upon, began with some amusing remarks about the pudding, and the pie being reserved for the last of the feast, but ingeniously diverted his remarks as he proceeded, into a glowing panegyric upon their host and entertainer, whose public life he reviewed and eulogized at considerable length.

“He knows nothing of the sentiment I am about to propose,” said the speaker in conclusion. “The suggestion comes from my own heart”—here he laid his hand upon his breast—“but the impulse is so strong, and the occasion so befitting, that I cannot resist its utterance! Gentlemen, fill your glasses ; I propose the health of our honored and beloved host, the next Mayor of New York.”

Instantly the men of padding began to cheer vociferously. The enthusiasm was contagious. Skipp and Grulls fairly danced with excitement. Little Scourge mounted a chair to be on an equality with his fellows. Even Cinnamon Smooth—the quiet, unimpassioned Smooth, Radical as he was—was swept into the current,

and was soon applauding with all his might.

During the excitement Barton Seacrist sat with a surprised, half-stunned expression of countenance. He did not respond at once. He was for some time too much affected to speak. At last, with an effort he arose and began slowly, and with visible emotion, to give utterance to his feelings. He spoke well, having repeated the same speech several times before. He first declared his surprise at the proposition to which they had just listened; then his thanks for the motives which had prompted it; then the reluctance he felt in listening to such a suggestion, even from the lips of his best and dearest friends. He was now an old man—he had served the public long, and, he trusted, acceptably—he had long been desirous of retiring from public life—he had lost the ambition he once felt, and preferred to give way to younger and better men. What he now wanted was repose. His friends should not ask of him to make further sacrifice. No, his friends——

He could proceed no further; but, covering his face to hide his emotion, he sat down completely overcome. Instantly the men of padding covered their faces. Then Skipp, then Grulls, then Bloom, then Cinnamon Smooth, and even Scourge of the *Sunday Plague*, followed by all the others in succession, covered their faces. Windsham wept audibly. It was a most affecting spectacle.

During the scenes just described, Abel Cummager had stood by a door opening from an adjoining room,

a spectator of the whole. He smiled coolly, even sneeringly, and at the conclusion of so much as has been related, turned on his heel and was soon chatting pleasantly with Kate Seacrist.

The next morning's *Rocket* contained a graphic account of the foregoing proceedings, and in the same number of the same paper was a leading article nominating Seacrist for Mayor of the city. He was in a fair way to make one of the "points" he had in contemplation.

But what of Clinton Maintland?

One of the saddest experiences to a young man is to part with illusions he has cherished concerning men whom, without personal knowledge, he has made the heroes of his boyish imagination. His first human idols are invariably members of his own sex. Of these, because of some imputed excellence, real or fancied, he forms conceptions, which, although gross exaggerations, have all the sacredness of reality. His faith in their genuineness is illimitable. To learn the truth—as the truth too often is—to discover from actual contact that the supposed divinities are but men, and possibly men of a low order, with the exception of one strong trait—is among the severest trials of life, and often goes further than anything else to destroy confidence in the foundations of human character.

But if it is hard for men to part with illusions concerning men, to fill the vacuum often come the most delightful impressions concerning women. About the same time that a young man ordinarily discovers that

he has been misled in his estimates of certain members of his own sex, he adopts with equal confidence the conviction that all excellence dwells in some member of the other sex. This illusion—if illusion it should prove, and as such be dispelled—usually lasts until the man has learned that life is full of disappointments, and, on the principle that “what can’t be helped must be borne,” has made up his mind to make the best of it.

That night, as Clinton Maintland went forth from the splendid home which had honored him as a guest, his mind was undergoing a strange, but not wholly disappointing, mutation. His eyes had been sorrowfully opened to the true character of men whom he had before profoundly revered, but a new glamour in turn was rapidly overspreading them. An image was before them, which he found it easy to invest with all possible charms, and the question arose in his mind, whether even he might not yet possess the germ of that sweet picture.

CHAPTER VII.

THE PARTY TO TAKE CARE OF HIM.

PERRY DOUBLEMAN was postmaster at Willowford, where he kept the village store ; and had reputably sustained that official character for well on to a dozen years.

The office “paid” a salary of two hundred dollars per annum, with some small additional perquisites. The plum, certainly, was not large ; but it had, on that account, been

none the less zealously sought after by quite a number of deserving, but sadly neglected, individuals, whose claims on the government—in all cases very strong—consisted of long and faithful services to their respective parties. And yet, strange to say, the lucky incumbent had originally secured the prize, and subsequently retained it through several changes of administration, not because he was, but because he was not, a politician.

Perry Doubleman was what, among party men, is called “a trimmer.” His policy was to smile upon all sides, and say nothing. He never committed himself—until the election was over—and then only by cautiously assuring the leaders of the winning party that, if he had voted—he always had business abroad on election day—he should have taken great satisfaction in supporting their ticket—which was true enough, as he would have cheerfully done as much for either side. And so Doubleman continued to enjoy the two hundred dollars of patronage to the immeasurable disgust of a small army of very meritorious and very hungry patriots.

But what contributed more to Perry Doubleman’s tenure in office than even his skill in balancing between parties, was the fact that his store had become the recognized rendezvous of all the politicians in the town. Here they would assemble as chance or inclination directed—their presence always being justified by a convenient inquiry for a letter—and discuss the claims and prospects of their respective factions

to their hearts' content. Many and heated were the controversies that ensued, as partisans of different schools encountered each other upon this common ground. But warm as their discussions became, Perry Doubleman never interfered—never ventured upon an opinion of his own—but would listen and smile upon both sides with the most gracious impartiality, making each believe that it had fully secured his sympathy. The consequence was that all sorts of politicians came in time to feel that they had in his store a vested interest, and as long as the discretion of the proprietor justified the universal claim that was set up to his allegiance, they were not disposed to relinquish a privilege they prized so highly.

Among those most regular in their visits to the Post Office was Hugh Maintland. His correspondence was limited, but here he always found a newspaper to read, or some acquaintance with whom he could discuss political matters for an hour, although sometimes his farm was the sufferer thereby. To quite a little circle of sympathizers in his views, who were accustomed to make Perry Doubleman's store their rallying point, Hugh Maintland was a sort of political oracle. Surrounded by these men he was happy, because in their society he found both congeniality and appreciation.

Two of their number only need be named.

Amos Grupp was a farmer of substance, owning his own place—and there were few better in the town—who had money both in bank and on

bond and mortgage. He was extremely Conservative in his views of public matters, regarding all taxes as the spoil of extortioners' robbery, and honestly believed his own predictions that the country was going straight to the dogs.

Jonas Phips was the fortunate holder of two or three petty offices, from which, as he was a very small man, he succeeded in obtaining a stinted living. As he owed his official positions, and consequently his bread and butter, entirely to the political party with which he acted, it could not possibly have had a more zealous and officious supporter.

Rarely did a day go by in which the three men—Maintland, Grupp, and Phips—were not to be seen in front of Doubleman's counter, reading from some favorite journal, or comparing opinions on political matters, in which, as they were all members of the same party, there was seldom anything like disagreement. They were the warmest of personal, as well as political, friends.

"If the country is to be saved at all, it must be by a speedy return to first principles. It is our only hope. Each day of trial—for our government is yet an experiment of doubtful issue—shows that our advance has been from bad to worse. What do we see about us but corruption in office and extravagance in private life—the inevitable fruits of Radical rule and teaching—and these things are pointed to as proofs of progress. What folly! What madness! No system, however perfect in theory, can long endure such degeneracy in practice. Oh, for a return to the

lights and the lives of our fathers—to another administration by a Washington, a Jefferson, or a Jackson!”

As Hugh Maintland impressively read these words, which were the conclusion of a very lengthy article in a leading Conservative journal denunciatory of the principles and policy of the political opposition, he looked round upon his audience, consisting of Grupp, Phips, and three or four others of the same party, who happened to be assembled in Doubleman's store, in such a way as to call for an expression of their views.

“That's the doctrine,” exclaimed Phips, with a forwardness and an energy characteristic of the man—“precisely what I have been saying all the time.”

“As true as preachin,” remarked Grupp, more tardily, but even more emphatically, than his predecessor. “Things is, beyond a doubt, gittin a great deal worse than they was—spesly taxes. Yes, yes, it's——”

“Unadulterated nonsense.”

All eyes were naturally turned upon the author of this totally unexpected commentary, which was pronounced in a clear, authoritative voice; and the majority of those present, including both Phips and Grupp, shrank back with manifest trepidation, as they discovered in the speaker Colonel Kortright, by all odds the richest and most important man in the town.

Not so Hugh Maintland. With perfect composure he encountered the contemptuous glance of his landlord. He was even the first to speak.

“So you do not approve of the sentiment, to which, if I am not mistaken, you have been a listener.”

“Approve of such trash?—no. Of course not. The idea that we, who are making progress in every department, don't know as well how to govern ourselves as our ancestors, who, although the radicals of their day, were practically centuries behind us—preposterous! absurd!”

The Colonel, irritated by the perfect coolness of his tenant, spoke even more harshly than his disapprobation of the doctrine to which he had been listening, would have otherwise prompted. His discourtesy, however, although perceived and keenly felt, produced no visible effect upon Maintland, who not only preserved an unruffled countenance, but deliberately rejoined:

“But you will hardly deny, I take it, Colonel, that there was more of virtue and patriotism among the founders of the government than is to be met with among the public men, taken as a body, of the present day?”

“Well—perhaps not—for the founders of the government were men of progressive ideas, and believing in the possibility of national improvement, bent all their energies to the task of pushing their country forward, while, unfortunately, a large portion of the public men and rulers of the present day being Conservatives, and not believing there is anything more to be done for the country, spend their time and energies in working for themselves. They are no better than the original Tories—the Conservatives of the Revolu-

tionary era—not a particle. Both should be set down as their country's enemies."

"Then it would appear, Colonel, from your own admission and argument, that the practical deduction from our Radical ancestors' premises has not justified their patriotic expectation. The result has been progress backward—not forward. My original proposition, therefore, that as a people, we are politically degenerating, is sustained by your own words."

Maintland's Conservative companions, who, surprised by the unexpected appearance of the adversary, had yielded the field at the first assault, began to pluck up heart as they saw the courage displayed by their leader, and at this point, exulting over what they believed to be the enemy's discomfiture, broke into an audible smile, which nettled the proud and sensitive Kortright, even more than his adversary's quiet self-possession. He however was not the man willingly to accept defeat—least of all from his own tenant, and one whom, as a "Bourbon," he politically hated and despised. So he promptly, but in bad temper, renewed the contest, simply parrying the point of attack.

"Your Conservatism, then, goes to the extent of opposing all political progress."

"I deny," replied Maintland, "that there can be any progress in political principles. Rulers a thousand years ago were honest, and a thousand years hence they can be no more than honest. Measures have been always right or wrong,

and they can never be anything more than right or wrong. Our fathers who laid the foundations of our governmental system, loved their country with all their heart, soul and strength, and our children can do no more—it will be well if they do as much.

"But, Colonel Kortright," he continued, "as you claim to be a Progressionist, and I am what you call an "old foggy," let us understand wherein we differ; or, in other words, what are your ideas of political progress? Do you disbelieve in any of the fundamental propositions of the Constitution which our fathers made for us?"

"No."

"Do you agree with those advanced philosophers who would remodel the social system, making the continuance of the marriage relation, for instance, a simple matter of agreement between the parties?"

"No."

"Do you subscribe to the doctrines of the Communists, and favor a reconstruction of the laws of property?"

"No—most decidedly no!"

"Then you occupy my ground?"

This was said with a quiet smile, which could not be otherwise than annoying. But Maintland's political sympathizers, whose spirits had been constantly rising throughout the controversy, even less considerate of their adversary's feelings at this point, gave expression to their exultation by stamping their feet and clapping their hands in a most irritating, and certainly, far from civil manner. The demonstration

was too much for Kortright's excitable and haughty temper. Flushing red with anger, which he had so far with difficulty restrained, he now burst forth with :

"No sir, I don't occupy your ground ; and let me tell you, Hugh Maintland, that there is some of my ground which you occupy, which had a great deal better be receiving your attention than the abominable doctrines you spend your time in teaching to the silly and unmanly rabble now about you. Do you understand that ?"

"I understand, sir," rejoined Maintland, springing to his feet and confronting Kortright, who had been standing during the conversation, with a countenance which, although collected, was several shades whiter from suppressed anger, "that this is a free country ; that I am a citizen of it, although a poor man and your tenant, and that I have as much right to entertain and express my opinions as you have yours."

"Opinions, pooh !" responded Kortright, none the less enraged, but a little awed by the look and manner of his tenant. "Opinions won't make your corn grow, nor pay your rent when pay-day comes. Instead of bothering yourself so much about the country, you had better look after the signs of degeneracy in your own fields. There, I admit, the father was superior to the son ; and, as for the next generation, I suppose it will still be worse. I learn that that big son of yours, who ought to be at home helping you take care of the farm, is off to New York, leading the life of an

idler ; but I dare say, it's in the blood to —— "

"Stop, Colonel Kortright," interrupted Maintland with a voice and look that checked the words on his landlord's lips "Not another breath of that kind, or there'll be trouble between us. You may insult me, if you choose, but, if you speak another word against my family, and especially against my boy, Clinton, who is an industrious, faithful lad, trying to make his own way in the world, I'll not be answerable for the consequences."

Neither of the men spoke another word. Face to face they continued to stand, showing the intensity of their feelings in their eyes, but without movement on either side, although Maintland's right hand was closely shut, as if awaiting the inducement to the blow.

Kortright was a man of spirit. His courage had been proved on more than one occasion, and his pride was excessive. To be thus bearded and threatened by his underling was almost more than he could endure. Yet he did endure it. He tried to look his adversary down, but there was that in his tenant's eye which was not to be looked down. This Kortright at last saw ; and, after a minute of most fearful suspense, letting his own eyes fall, he turned on his heel and walked out of the house.

"Colonel Kortright, Colonel Kortright," piteously shouted Perry Doubleman, who, during the altercation had fled behind his counter ; but who, now seeing his best customer driven from the house, fol-

lowed him to the door, "is there anything I can do for you?—anything I can do for you?"

Colonel Kortright paid no more attention to his words than if they had been the barking of a dog. Untying his horse which stood at the store entrance, he silently mounted and rode away.

"Your hand!" enthusiastically exclaimed Phips, as he rushed up to Maintland and grasped the member mentioned—waiting, however, until Colonel Kortright had got beyond sight and hearing.

"Splendidly, magnificently done!" he rattled on, as he shook away most vigorously—"just the thing I should have done myself, under the circumstances."

"Hurrah!" shouted the half dozen other Conservatives present, crowding about Maintland, and each in turn grasping his hand.

"I couldn't have done it for anything," groaned Perry Doubleman, leaning disconsolately against his counter; and no one knowing the man, would for a moment have questioned the truth of his words.

"It's grit," remarked the practical-minded Grupp, coming forward the last in order to take Maintland's hand. "But, neighbor, I hope you've got a sure thing for your rent again the next time; for if you hain't, after what's happened here to-day, I wouldn't give much for your chance with the Colonel."

"Indeed, sir," rejoined Maintland, "it is doubtful whether I can have the full amount by regular pay-day. I have not been in luck with my crops this season. But that's not the

thing. Principle is principle; and I'd have done precisely the same if my landlord had the power to turn me off this very day. He owns the land I live on, but thank God! my conscience is my own."

"Hurrah!" roared the crowd once more.

"Never fear for the money," shouted Phips, again getting Maintland by the hand. "You shan't suffer for the money. After what's happened here to-day, the party will take care of you. I tell you, sir, the party will take care of you."

"Yes, yes, the party will take care of you," as with one voice chimed all the others.



CHAPTER VIII.

ONE OF THE FAMILY.

"FATHER, I must have some money."

The speaker was as fine a looking young fellow as could be seen in a thousand—neat in attire, graceful in person, with brilliant eyes, glossy black hair, smoothly cut features, hands small and delicate, feet to match, and a general expression of countenance which was decidedly winning, notwithstanding an air of assurance which betrayed the careless, if not dissolute, liver. The party addressed with such confident familiarity was Barton Seacrist, Tammany Sachem, and candidate for the Mayoralty of New York city. Any one seeing the two men together could have told at a glance that they were father and son.

"Why, Gordon, it was but a few

days ago I gave you a liberal supply."

"Very true, father; but when money is gone, what is the use of talking about it?"

"But how could you have spent it so soon? It was a thousand dollars."

"Money goes very fast at Cum-mager's, sometimes."

"At Cum-mager's! How often, my son, have I warned you on that point? Abel Cum-mager is a dangerous man—a very dangerous man."

"And my father's particular friend. It was only the other night that he was in this house, in this room, and never was there a more favored guest. Why should you pet the man whom I am to shun?"

"I have my reasons—political reasons."

"So may I have my reasons for cultivating Abel Cum-mager's friendship. But that is neither here nor there. I want money."

"And why should I give you money?" responded the old man with some acerbity. "You are my son, it is true; but that gives you no right to rob me. I have had to make my money—earn it; and why should I surrender the fruits of my labor, whenever you demand the means of gratifying your extravagance or your vices?"

"I'll tell you why, father. I'm glad you're inclined to reason the matter." And the young man shifted his position so as to look the old one full in the eye. "I'll tell you why. Perhaps you think I don't know how you got your money. If you do, I can inform you how you

made a hundred thousand dollars in the opening of one street, where you were appointed to appraise damages; how you made two hundred thousand by buying for the city which you officially represented, property which you owned in another's name; how you made three hundred thousand by selling the city's bonds for that much less than they were worth to your own agent; and how you made over a million, by being secretly in partnership with men having work for the city to do, and whose pay you regulated. Oh, I can tell you the whole story from first to last; and what's more, I can tell it to others as well. As a citizen and a patriot, I really feel that it is my duty to make the facts known; and I know of no way in which my conscience can be relieved, except by being made a *particeps criminis* in the use of some of the money."

"Now, father, the money you have, doesn't belong to you any more than it does to me. It belongs to the people of New York city. Such being the case, you have no moral right to keep it all to yourself. You are clearly obligated to divide with somebody, and with whom can you do so, I should like to know, more appropriately than with myself? I'm one of the family. I'm your son—a bad boy, I confess, but happily so well acquainted with your business that it's your interest, as well as your duty, to do a father's part by me. Now don't you think I have made out a case?"

Barton Seacrist made no immediate reply. He was a cool man—a very cool man; nevertheless, he arose

and walked up and down the room in evident agitation. His son remained seated with an air of provoking nonchalance.

"Come, father," said the young gentleman, when several minutes of unbroken silence had gone by, "we are losing time. I thought you were a man of business."

"It's not for the money I care," responded Barton Seacrist, turning sharply upon his son. "I'm an old man now, and I'll soon have to give it up. But it is hard, hard, hard, to have to surrender the wealth I have bartered soul and conscience for, to become the means of ruining my own child. Oh Gordon, you and Kate are all I have. I do love you both. Then why should you torment me in this unfeeling manner? Kate does not do so."

"Sister Kate is a good girl—and I'm an undutiful son, I know," replied the youth with some little sign of being touched with his father's emotion. "But the case is not quite as bad as you make it. I have begun to amend."

At the word "amend," Barton Seacrist stopped in his walk, and set his eyes upon his son.

"Yes, father, amend. I have begun to turn over a new leaf. I've put away two mistresses within the last six months, and——"

"That's a good boy."

"And taken only one new one. That's something in the way of reformation at least.

"But that's not all," he went on; "I have resolved on another very great step. I have made up my mind to get married."

"Married, Gordon?"

"Yes, father—to an honest, virtuous, beautiful girl, and, what is quite as much, if not a little more, to the purpose—the possessor in her own right of a very pretty property. I've had that point carefully investigated, so that there's no mistake about it. When I'm her husband—although I don't expect to exactly settle down at once into an old man and join the Quakers' society—I'll at least not have to call on you every fortnight for money. That's something I know you'll appreciate."

"And who, pray, is this paragon you propose to make happy as the future Mrs. Gordon Seacrist?" asked the old gentleman in a somewhat skeptical tone.

"Do you know Colonel Kortright, a leading man in the State Senate from somewhere up in the country?"

"Very well."

"And that his first wife was a great heiress?"

"I have so understood."

"And died, leaving one daughter her only heir?"

"I believe I have heard as much."

"Well, she's the party I've honored with my selection."

"I must congratulate you."

"Yes, father, I have decided on making Margaret Kortright my wife—if I can, and from my uniform success with the ladies, I don't distrust my ability.

"Nor is that the only important step I have determined upon," continued the youth, seeing that his father was listening attentively; "I have resolved to go into politics."

"Politics, Gordon?"

"Yes, father—politics. Seeing the kind of men, who succeed politically in New York, I have come to the conclusion that I have the very qualities—inherited, I suppose—that are essential to success. Whether I shall join Tammany, and in time become a Sachem, or give my support to the Mohicans, is a point I have not yet quite decided in my own mind. Most likely the latter, for then I shall have Abel Cummager to help me on. We are very thick, Abel and I. And when I'm in politics, and have jobs of my own, I'll not be under the necessity of begging like a dog for what money I may need for any little indulgence. So, you see, there's hope for me yet, father."

"How much money do you now want?" asked Barton Seacrist, speaking as if he had not heard what his son had just been saying.

"Two thousand dollars will answer for the present."

"I have but one thousand with me."

"Could you not give me a check for the balance?"

"Not after what happened with the last one I gave you."

"Oh, in that case, I was merely correcting what I thought to be a mistake you had made—raised a figure three to a five."

"But I would have you understand that I don't make mistakes of that kind."

"Well! well! give me the one thousand dollars. I'll have to try to make it answer for present needs."

The money was handed over, and,

with a profusion of thanks—for the son had inherited all his father's elegance of manner—Gordon bowed himself out of the old gentleman's presence, and was soon in one of Abel Cummager's gilded dens of iniquity.

Barton Seacrist sat long with bowed head and a peculiarly sad and troubled countenance, after his son had left him. The subject of his meditations, it was plain enough, was far from an agreeable one.

It was thus he was sitting as Kate Seacrist entered the room.

"Why, father, you look as if something had annoyed you. I thought Gordon was with you."

With that she kissed her father lovingly.

Barton Seacrist made no reply in words, but rising, he threw his arms about his daughter's neck, and, resting his head upon her shoulder, wept long and bitterly.

CHAPTER IX.

OUR DUTY TO SOCIETY

"I SAY it's *scandalus*—that I do."

"Who were they? I never heard of them before."

"Nobody — absolutely nobody. They lived somewhere away down town. Mr. Seacrist, my husband says, has made a great deal of money out of some office he's had—which may be very well so far—but as to society, they've never been nobody."

"And now, since they've come on our street, I suppose they'll look for

all of us to call and do the agreeable."

"Well, they may look. Not that I've got anything against the people; but then our duty to society. I don't believe in encouraging everybody."

"Nor I, Mrs. Goaring. They'll get nothing but the cold shoulder from me."

"Have you noticed their window curtains, Mrs. Barnabas? What rich patterns."

"And their carriage, Mrs. Goaring! It eclipses all of us. Oh, we're in the shade now!"

And the speaker smiled a smile that was decidedly wintery.

"Mr. Milks, the carpet man—I always buy of Meaker, but I heard that he was furnishing them, so I went and looked at some of his things—told me that he hadn't carpeted anybody so richly for ever so long."

"And Bilkins, the furniture man—Mrs. Crowty told me he was supplying them—says that he has never done anything like their establishment before."

"Oh, they're determined to shine!—that's clear. I say it's *scandalus*."

"Well, I suppose they can afford it. My husband says that Mr. Seacrist is undoubtedly one of the richest men in New York—has made it all out of office, and by the most frightful dishonesty; but that doesn't make them a bit the better."

"No, indeed!"

"As for old Mr. Seacrist himself, though, they say he's quite a clever, gentlemanly man. But his family—"

"As for the girl, they do say she's not bad-looking, quite——"

(The last speaker had a marriageable son, but no daughter.)

"Oh, she's a low thing. They say she actually writes for her father—is a sort of secretary—and talks politics with men—quite unsexes herself, in fact. But, as for the boy, they say he's quite good-looking, quite——"

(This speaker had a marriageable daughter, but no son.)

"A terrible reprobate from all accounts—gamble fearfully—quite breaks his father's heart."

"Well, I must be going, Mrs. Barnabas."

"What's your hurry, Mrs. Goaring? I'm so glad you've called this morning."

"You must come and see me soon, Mrs. Barnabas—very soon."

"Thank you!—I will, my dear Mrs. Goaring—thank you!"

But still the visitor lingered. It was clear there was something more upon her mind.

"As to these new neighbors of ours, then, we quite understand each other," she finally remarked. "We are to give them the go-by altogether—cut them entirely."

"Certainly—our duty to society."

"I'm so glad I've seen you. Good morning, Mrs. Barnabas!"

"Come again soon, Mrs. Goaring. Good morning!"

"Matilda!" said Mrs. Barnabas to her daughter, who had, novel in hand, been sitting, or rather lounging, on a sofa in the back parlor, and had overheard all that had passed between her mother and her visitor

in the front room, as soon as Mrs. Goaring was gone.

"Matilda, my dear!"—at the second mention of her name, the young lady languidly withdrew her eyes from the volume she was reading—"I must go over and call on our new neighbors, the Seacrists, right away."

"Why, mother, what do you mean? Mrs. Goaring says——"

"That Mr. Seacrist is one of the richest men in New York—a millionaire."

"But our duty to society, ma," responded the young lady, with a glimmer in one corner of her eye that bore some faint resemblance to a smile.

"Duty to ourselves first, I should rather say."

"But what will Mrs. Goaring think, if she hears of it?"

"I don't care what she thinks, if I can only secure what I'm thinking of."

"What is that, ma?"

"A husband for you, child."

"Why, who are you thinking of this time, ma?"

"Our neighbor's son—young Seacrist."

"Oh dear, the reprobate!"

"Nonsense, girl! Young Seacrist may be wild; but all young men in the upper circles are now wild. That, I'm sure, is no great matter. Your pa was wild when I married him, and he's made a tolerably good husband, all things considered. You have to marry a man on uncertainty, anyhow. Young Seacrist's the only son of a millionaire—that much is certain; and if we only do our duty,

while the others are shrugging their shoulders at them, because they're upstarts, we'll secure the prize before they know it."

"But, ma——"

"No 'buts' about it, child. Do you know how old you are?"

"Nineteen past. So I heard you say yesterday; and, as my mother, I'm sure you ought to know."

"Nineteen past, pooh! Yes, a good ways past. Twenty-five the eighth of last January. Nineteen won't do much longer, I can tell you; and just now you haven't got the slightest prospect. Young Rolander is completely off; Count Kapper has turned out to be an impostor; and Charley Dovetale's father has broke all to pieces. A young lady in your situation can't afford to have 'buts,' when a millionaire's son is involved—no, indeed. You must begin at once to make love to his sister."

"The low thing!"

"Low thing, or high thing, I tell you it's necessary. It's a chance which doesn't offer every day, and we must improve it. I shall call on Miss Seacrist to-morrow morning; apologize for your not accompanying me; invite her over; and you must make the most of her, and the brother, too, when he comes."

"Very well, ma! Have your own way; but do let me alone now. I am reading Mrs. Manytale's last novel, the Green Dragon; and I've just got to where it is so interesting—where there's going to be another murder, and perhaps two of them."

Here the young lady adjusted herself upon the sofa in a position a lit-

tle nearer the horizontal, and was soon absorbed in the delightful horrors of the Green Dragon, while her enterprising mother went off to busy herself with her own affairs, or those of her neighbors, as occasion required.

That night there was an interesting discussion between Mr. and Mrs. Goaring, after that worthy couple had laid themselves down upon their connubial couch. The subject was the not very agreeable one of their only and decidedly unruly son, Rushmore, who had spent a great deal of money, and now, after having unsuccessfully endeavored to ruin the daughter of a poor, but worthy man—in which, if he had succeeded, he would not have materially damaged his social position—actually threatened to irretrievably compromise himself and his family by marrying the “trollop.”

“I have it, husband; exactly what we are to do with Rushy,” exclaimed the exultant wife and mother.

“Duced glad to hear it; for I’ll be blasted if I know,” answered the husband.

“We must marry him to a girl with money.”

“Yes, yes; that’s all very easy to say; but where is there such a one that we can get?”

“I’ve got the one in my eye now.”

“Then I wish you would get her out. That’s a very unnecessary place to keep her.”

“Now, Dolly, be sober, won’t you? I tell you I know the very person.”

“Who is she?”

“Our new neighbor’s daughter.”

“What, the girl of that old politi-

cian, Seacrist, who is said to have stolen more money belonging to New York than any other ten men in it?”

“What difference does that make to us, so that he’s got the money, and Rushy can get the girl?”

“That’s true, wife. But how are you going to bring it about? Have they seen each other?”

“Not yet; but I am going to call on Miss Seacrist to-morrow forenoon, and it will be an easy matter to bring the girl round. You see, Mrs. Barnabas and all the other people on the street have made up their minds to cut the Seacrists, because they’re upstarts, and that will leave the coast clear for us. I shall make more of the poor girl on that account, and so will soon have her all right. She’s a low thing, I’ve no doubt, but then Rushy seems to have a liking for low people.”

“Very well, wife; I’ll leave it all to you. You’re up to that sort of thing.”

And with that remark, the masculine Goaring, turning his back to his admirable help-meet, soon showed by his regular and sonorous breathing the relief which the conversation had brought to his mind.

The next day Mrs. Barnabas and Mrs. Goaring met in the parlor of the Seacrists, and in the presence of Kate. There was a start of surprise—then a slight frown—then a smile of greeting—then a kiss, and then the most pressing inquiries concerning each other’s health and their respective families. Born sisters could not have been more loving.

To Kate they overflowed with expressions of welcome, and were un-

bounded in their admiration for everything she possessed. Upon rising to leave they kissed her in succession, and both declared their warmest desire to make her feel at ease in her new home.

"My dear Matilda," said Mrs. Barnabas, "was so disappointed in not being able to come with me to-day; but when she knows you, she will love you like a sister."

"I have no daughter," said Mrs. Goaring with a sigh, "only a son—my big boy Rushmore—but we will all do our best to make you happy."

Then they went their several ways.

Although Mrs. Barnabas declared to her daughter, and Mrs. Goaring to her husband, that the other was a "deceitful creature," it is a satisfaction to be able to state that their neighborly relations were not in the least impaired by the incidents related.

CHAPTER X.

FROM HIGH TO LOW.

THE writer now finds it necessary not only to descend from the ecstatic regions of social and political high life, but to go back a little way and take up a thread of the narrative which has been dropped, in order that the skein of the story may be kept complete.

It will be recollected that in his letter to Martin Swartwout, descriptive of his battle with starvation while waiting for business, Clinton Maintland spoke of dividing, when

at the most desperate crisis of his fortunes, the pittance he had procured by the pawning of his overcoat, with one who was more a subject of pity than himself. He promised his uncle to tell him the story, but, as there is no evidence that he ever did so, I shall now undertake to tell it for him.

In his extremity, the clientless young attorney was driven to become his own boarding-master. He was accustomed, when the shades of evening had fallen, to slip out to a cheap bake-shop, purchase a supply of provisions for the next day, and, with his bundle under his arm, selecting the shady side of the street, glide back to his office, which was dining and sleeping apartment as well.

One evening as he was waiting his turn to be served at the counter, keeping as far as possible in the shadow, he was startled at seeing enter the shop a young woman, whose countenance exhibited a degree of beauty and refinement which proved her to be greatly superior to the mass of customers—chiefly of foreign birth—frequenting the establishment. Her features, although prematurely thin and wasted, were remarkably delicate and regular, and the expression of her eye was modest to timidity. An indescribable something in her manner, showed not only that she had enjoyed the privileges of a lady, but that the instincts of her higher nature were unextinguished. Otherwise, there was nothing to distinguish her from the throng in which she moved. Her apparel was thin and shabby

and upon one arm she carried an infant only a few weeks old, as meanly covered as herself.

Clinton, as the first comer, was entitled to the preference at the counter; but he held back until the woman had gone forward, laid down a few pennies, received a coarse loaf of bread, and left the shop. Then, in being waited upon, he quietly asked the old woman serving him, who that was that had just gone out.

"Some poor creature," was the indifferent reply, accompanied with a shrug of the shoulders, which said very plainly that was all she cared about knowing concerning her.

The face, however, haunted Clinton. He thought of it on his way to his room. He thought of it a number of times the next day. He thought of it so much, in fact, that when night again came, he stationed himself in the same position as before, to await its reappearance. He was not disappointed. Its possessor came in—her infant on her arm—made her way to the counter, laid down her pennies, received her loaf, and instantly hurried away. This occurred night after night, and all the time Clinton was becoming more and more interested in the stranger. To get another glimpse of that sweet, pale face, was almost as much of an inducement to him to visit the shop, as the prospect of his next day's dinner.

One night, however, she did not come at the usual hour. He waited until he had arrived at the conclusion that she was not going to come, had made his customary purchase, and was about to leave the shop,

when the door opened and the unknown customer came in. Clinton stepped back for the purpose of watching her movements. She approached the counter as usual, but, instead of laying down her money, leaned forward and said something to the proprietress of the establishment in a voice so low that Clinton could not hear. The answer, however, was distinct enough.

"It's the rule of the shop never to give without the money."

And the old saleswoman drew herself up stiffly, and looked sharply, even indignantly, at the shrinking creature before her.

"But I am promised my pay to-morrow," hesitatingly expostulated the poor girl, her voice trembling and a tear glistening on her cheek. "It's not so much on my own account," she went on, "but I haven't got strength for the baby."

But, as she spoke these words, noticing that one corner of the old handkerchief bound round the infant's head had fallen over its face, she raised her hand to remove it, and, as she did so, a ring upon one of her fingers flashed brightly in the light. The old shop-mistress, whose features had really begun to relent, noticed it.

"A pretty story!" she immediately broke out, bristling up with a grand show of indignation. "Asking me for credit when ye wear such a thing as that. Go to the pawnbroker with ye. There's one just round the corner. Want me to trust ye, do ye, when my lady can wear a ring like any princess? Why don't ye sell it?"

"I can't—he gave it to me."

"He—and who's he?"

"My—my husband."

"Husband, hey!" shrilly piped the crone; "a pretty husband that lets ye beg the bread ye put into yer mouth. But stand back there, and let other customers have a chance. They haven't got no husbands, or if they have, they're not the kind that lets their wives go a-begging. A pretty story! A pretty story, indeed! has a husband—wears a ring—and wants me to trust her for the victuals she eats. I wonder what the shop would live on. Just as though I must provide other people's wives with bread. Husband—pooh!"

And the old termagant rattled on at a furious rate, growing more boisterous the longer she considered the imposition that had been attempted upon her, and retailing the story of "the trollop with a grand gold ring," asking to be trusted for a loaf of bread, to every customer who would stop to listen to her raving; for the object of her denunciation had already fled the shop, and Clinton had followed her.

The poor, repulsed, insulted creature at first hurried, almost ran, from the place; but gradually her pace slackened, and finally she stopped altogether at the entrance to one of the most wretched tenement establishments in New York. There she stood as if hesitating whether to enter or not, when Clinton, who had been closely following her, stepped up, placed his own loaf of bread in her arms, and, without a word, passed on and out of sight.

A night or two afterwards, as he was returning from the pawnbroker's with the proceeds of his overcoat in his pocket, hurrying along one of the poorer streets, he was timidly addressed by a shrinking creature with a baby on her arm, who held out her hand for charity. Turning sharply upon the mendicant—he hardly knew why—just as a gleam from a street lamp passed over her features, he was astonished to discover his companion of the bake-shop. He spoke, and although kindly, she shrank back in terror, and would have fled, had he not seized her hand. A few words sufficed to remove her apprehensions and secure her confidence, when he was put in possession of her story.

Her history was by no means an exceptional one. An innocent country girl, she had clandestinely married and followed to the city a young man who claimed to be of wealthy parentage. For reasons of a family nature which he plausibly urged, it was agreed that, for a time, the marriage should be kept secret, and his relatives should not be inquired after. At first he was very affectionate and very liberal, supplying her with every indulgence; but just before her baby was born he abandoned her altogether, leaving her utterly destitute of money. For a time she subsisted by disposing of her jewelry and her better clothing, until her wedding ring was all of any value that remained. She then sought work; but her baby was troublesome, she herself was not strong, and employment was hard to find. She had not lost all confi-

dence in her husband's return—he had seemed so loving and so true—but she could not live on hope. At last necessity drove her to ask for charity on the street, and the first one to whom she applied was Clinton.

Her name, she told him, was Plain—Alice Plain—her husband's Henry Plain. Clinton offered to divide equally with her what he had received from his coat; but, upon learning that he was nearly as destitute as herself, she at first refused to accept anything of him, and finally was prevailed upon to take only one dollar.

A few days afterwards came the turn in Clinton's fortunes. Among the first things he did, after his pockets were supplied, was to hunt out Mrs. Plain, inform her of his success, hand her ten dollars—a portion of his first fee—and give her his business card, with the assurance that that would direct her where to apply should she stand in need of further assistance. Days and weeks went by and he saw nothing more of her; and as, with the influx of business, he had something else to think about, she had almost passed out of his thoughts, when recalled to his mind in the manner related in the next chapter.

CHAPTER XI.

WHERE CHARITY LED.

“WOULD you believe it, father, Mag has found another angel in distress, and to-day wasted as much money on her as would have got

me that love of a mantle I have so wanted?—another impostor I know.”

“Oh, no, Clara! not an impostor this time. That face——”

“Nonsense, the face! The deepest always smile the sweetest. That Italian——”

“What is it, girls?”

The first speaker was Clara Bafford, a petite and sprightly blonde, perhaps seventeen years of age; the second our old-time acquaintance, Margaret Kortright, but now a young lady of twenty; and the third Archibald Bafford, father of the first and uncle to the second, having been a brother to Colonel Kortright's first wife and Margaret's deceased mother. He, Archibald Bafford, was a staid, bald-headed man of sixty, a merchant of New York city, wealthy, but whose style of living fully kept pace with his means, and altogether a most respectable and aristocratic man. In his family Margaret Kortright, having shortly before returned from a European tour following the completion of her seminary course, was at the time making her home. Here she was, of course, brought into the most intimate companionship with her cousin Clara, and all the points of difference in their characters were speedily developed. These proved to be many, notwithstanding the girls were the dearest of friends. Margaret, both physically and spiritually, was largely organized, with a heart full of the most generous tendencies, and her rather secluded life—for she had really been but a few months in society—had fostered,

rather than checked, the kindly promptings of her nature, which now the enjoyment of ample means in her own right as her mother's heiress enabled her liberally to gratify. Clara, on the other hand—a self-willed, and rather extravagant little beauty—having passed all her life amid the hardening influences of a great city, and having no resource except her father's sometimes over-taxed purse, naturally looked upon all applicants for charity with suspicion, and regarded the allowances made in their behalf as generally wasted. Here had been the source of many disputations between the cousins.

"What is it, girls?" inquired Archibald Bafford, looking up sagely from his evening paper.

"Why, father, what do you think! only the other day a ragged little urchin, his clothes all greasy, and his hands and face, oh, so dirty! was standing out in front of the house begging. Along comes such a nice, gentlemanly-looking man, and, as the impertinent little fellow holds out his slimy hand, he gives him a rap over the knuckles with his cane and walks on. That set young impudence to bawling right lustily. 'How heartless!' exclaimed Mag, who had been looking on, and down she runs, bolts right out on the street, and the next minute had the little ragamuffin in the house. You ought to have heard how she went on over him. He had such sweet eyes. He was an Italian—she knew he was. Of course he was an Italian; though from his voice I knew he was Irish. He was an orphan—

had neither father nor mother to take care of him. Of course he hadn't. He must be hungry. Yes, very hungry—and she must run and get something for him to eat. And with that, laying down a bracelet she was holding in her hand when she discovered his beggarship, she starts for the kitchen. I had something else to do than watch street-strollers, and so paid no attention to Mag's protégé, and—and what do you think! when she came back, carrying the nicest kind of a breakfast on a waiter in her own hands, the dear little Italian and bracelet were both gone."

Here the narrator was so overcome by merriment that it was some time before she could proceed.

"But, father, it didn't do her a bit of good," she resumed when able to speak. "To-day she showed that she was just as big a goose as ever. This is the way it was: Mag and I had gone down street, and Madam Juvenal told us of a woman that did such nice braiding, and so reasonably. That was just what I wanted to find, and so, taking the direction, we set out to hunt her. Oh, what a quarter it was! The street was full, of horrid, red-faced men and women, and the raggedest, rowdy children. I should have turned back at once, only I thought any one living there must work very cheap. At last we reached the place—and such a hole! We went up at least four pairs of stairs, creaky and slimy—it was awful—and there, clear at the top, we found the person. She wasn't bad looking, though so thin and sorrowful, and had a baby. That was

enough for Mag. Without waiting for me to say anything about the braiding, she began to ask the woman all about herself. Of course she told a pitiful story. The baby had been sick—she couldn't get work—her husband had deserted her; for of course she was married—and she didn't know where he was, and wanted to know so much; and then she cried and kissed the baby. Oh, I tell you it was affecting! and I couldn't help crying a little, just a little, myself, though I didn't believe a thing she said. But Mag, she believed every word of it, and off we had to go forthwith, and engage a nice, clean room for her, and have her and her baby moved to it before we ever got home; and Mag spent as much money on the creature as would have bought me that mantle I admire so much. Now, did you ever hear of anything like it?"

"But I'll take my word that I wasn't deceived this time," she at whose expense the story had been told, succeeded in getting in. "That face was enough for me; and better still, the poor creature was so thankful, not for charity, but for work. Not one penny would she accept, and not one step would she go towards her new quarters, until it was understood that she was to work for every cent I expended on her account. Oh, Clara, how could you be so cruel as to try to beat her down on her prices, and she so gentle and so willing?"

"Because I wasn't such a goose as ——"

"Stop, stop, girls — that's far enough!" mildly at this point inter-

posed the paternal Bafford, as he saw the signs of a threatened quarrel.

"Your cousin, Clara dear," he continued, with a slightly corrective tone to his daughter, "has not lived in a city as much as you have, and naturally sympathizes with all in distress."

"I don't care," responded the petted little woman in a pout. "Mag is always stopping to help beggars, and poking into out-of-the-way, disagreeable places, when we are out together."

"Which proves that your cousin has a generous heart," replied Mr. Bafford.

"Heart or no heart," rejoined the self-willed girl, "I for one, don't like beggars half as well as I do wealthy people, and I'd rather go to Stewart's any day than to the Five Points."

The conversation had reached a point where it was manifestly unpleasant to Miss Kortright, who sought to give it another direction.

"Uncle," said she, "the poor woman that Clara has been telling about, really interests me—so much so, that I wish I could help her find that runaway husband of hers, for I have faith in the story she tells. Do you know of any one who could be found to assist ——"

"The police."

"Oh yes! but don't lawyers sometimes undertake such matters?"

"Certainly, if they are paid well enough."

"Do you know an attorney here in New York named Maintland—Clinton Maintland?"

"Maintland—Maintland—I think I have heard the name."

"I think I know him. We were raised together—that is, his father lived on my father's land, and we knew each other. He told me that he intended to read law and then go to New York to make his fortune."

"And then return and marry the girl he made his confidant," interposed Clara, not yet restored to good humor.

A tell-tale blush was the only reply.

"I have reason to believe that the Clinton Maintland I refer to is in New York," continued Margaret, addressing her uncle, "because I find the name in the *Herald* in connection with an important trial in one of the courts."

With that she handed her uncle the paper containing the article she referred to.

"Oh, that's what made you so careful of that old newspaper all day," snarled Clara. "I knew there was something about a beggar or somebody else in it."

"Maintland—that's the name of the lawyer I was recommended to employ in some business I have. I thought of hunting him up to-morrow," remarked Mr. Bafford, as he finished reading a very complimentary notice of an argument Clinton had made in an important case, and handed Margaret back the paper.

"Could you do me the favor, uncle," said she, "when you see this Mr. Maintland, to ascertain whether he is from Willowford—because there may be more than one person

of the name—and if so, let him know that I am in the city, and would be pleased to renew our acquaintance, as there are friends of his I am anxious to inquire about."

"Certainly, my dear."

And so Clinton Maintland learned that his old-time companion, who, through long years of separation, had held a bright place in his thoughts, was in the same city with himself, and had not forgotten him—her rich father's poor neighbor's son. His heart gave a great throb at the intelligence. But it gave a greater one when, beneath the roof of the aristocratic Mr. Bafford, he met—not a half grown girl, with disordered hair and careless dress—but a tall and queenly woman, elegant in attire, and courtly in manner, whose intelligence and beauty alike commanded admiration.

Nor was the surprise all on his side. Clinton had changed wonderfully, and for the better. Instead of a country bumpkin, beardless and in a farmer's linen frock, as he had lived, and pleasantly lived in her imagination, Margaret found herself confronted by a tall and imposing gentleman, easy in manner and graceful in carriage, his handsome face set off by a full, black moustache, and his ample person adorned by a fashionable, but not too elaborate, outfit. Clinton had, since his improving fortunes gave him the means, paid considerable attention to externals. If not actuated by personal vanity, he was at least resolved to get the full benefit of what nature had done for him.

The embarrassment of such a meeting soon gave way to pleasant reminiscences. Old times furnished abundant subjects for agreeable discourse—not the least of which was that half accidental, half premeditated, meeting by the old stone wall in the little grove, their last for six long years, which is described in one of the opening chapters of this work, and the recollection of which brought increased color to both their faces. The time passed so rapidly and so pleasantly that it is no wonder Clara Bafford, who just then happened to be anxious for Margaret's companionship in a shopping expedition, should have grown impatient at the delay. At last she could endure the suspense no longer; and, perhaps having a slight curiosity to gratify, as well as a desire to terminate an interview which interfered with her plans, went singing and dancing into the parlor, as if totally unconscious that there was any one there. Of course she was greatly surprised and embarrassed when she found herself in the presence of a stranger, and said something about thinking that somebody was gone; but recovered her composure sufficiently to undergo the ordeal of an introduction.

Clinton, hastily apologizing for the length of his stay, arose to take his leave.

"Pardon me, Mr. Maintland," said Margaret, "for detaining you a few moments longer. In the pleasure your accounts of our mutual friends have given me, I had quite forgotten a matter of business on which I wished to confer with you—something professional."

"Or confessional," added Clara, now quite restored to her usual serenity.

"At your service," replied Clinton, bowing and again seating himself.

Then followed Margaret's account of her meeting with Alice Plain, and a statement of how much she had been interested in her—a story in which Clinton took no extraordinary interest, until it suddenly occurred to him that she might be describing his old acquaintance of the bake-shop, of whom he had heard and thought nothing for a considerable time.

"High forehead, light brown hair, eyes of a——"

Clinton stopped, and, as he did so, he blushed to the very roots of his hair. He had almost betrayed himself, and he had no desire to explain the circumstances of his becoming acquainted with Alice Plain. Margaret saw his embarrassment, and was the more surprised as she had said nothing descriptive of the person of her in whose behalf she was speaking; but was too well bred to seem to notice, and too kindly disposed to draw an unfavorable inference from what she did not understand. So Clinton took the name and address of his new client, and, promising to give the matter his attention, left; but not until he had been warmly pressed to repeat his call at an early day.

"So that is your country lover?" said Clara, on the day following Clinton's call.

"Very good looking, too, is he not?" replied Margaret with unceasing satisfaction.

"Oh, yes, he'll do—but I really don't think him equal to some of your city-raised followers—Mr. Seacrist, for instance. Mr. Seacrist is so graceful and so nice-looking."

"Mr. Seacrist is very pleasant," replied Margaret carelessly.

"I think he's splendid," rejoined Clara. "I only wish he was half as devoted to me as he is to you."

"You may have him for anything I care."

"Thank you! I don't take lovers at second hand. But now don't you think Gordon Seacrist is nice?"

"I am afraid he is fast."

"Oh, that's what they say of all the nice young men now. I don't care for that. I rather like it. If ever I marry a man, I want him to be some one who not only has the means, but knows how to enjoy it; and if he does drink a little, and play a little, and—and flirt a little, on occasions, I'll try to endure it."

"In which case you shall have my pity."

"Pity or no pity, it's what we're doomed to. From what they say of the young men whom it would be at all the thing for people in our station to marry, I calculate one's about as good as another."

"For shame, Clara, how you talk! What you say may be true of some of the young men of the period, but not of all. The man whom we saw yesterday is one in whose honor I could put every dependence."

"Well! well! you may be right—I hope you are—but it seems strange that he should be able to describe that afflicted angel of yours so accurately—now doesn't it?"

Margaret was saved the necessity of replying to this rather awkward suggestion by the sudden appearance of a servant—a Hibernian—who began glibly to relate how the sewing woman that had just left a bundle, had returned in "a great illustration" about a bit of paper containing the whereabouts of one who was "a sort of lover of hers, and had had the keeping of her," and which she had by mistake left in the bundle.

Alice Plain had but a short time before left a package containing some work she had done for Margaret, and which, although sent up to its owner, had as yet remained unopened. It was to that she had reference when speaking of the address of a gentleman who had assisted her in her distress, and which she did not wish to lose. The Hibernian's imagination had supplied the balance.

"Oh, now we'll see who the villain is!" exclaimed Clara, springing up and seizing the neatly-bound package, which she began hastily to open. It was in vain that Margaret called upon her to desist, as they had no right to the poor woman's secret. Paying no attention to her remonstrance, the self-willed girl snapped the string which she found herself unable immediately to loosen, unrolled the daintily-folded stuff, and out fluttered a little piece of paste-board, looking very much like a business card. It had hardly reached the floor before Clara had seized it, and, holding it out before her, burst into a loud and hoydenish laugh.

"Oh, the man of honor!" she ex-

claimed when able to speak in her merriment. "And she such an angel, too. Oh, Mag, Mag, what a goose you are!"

With that she handed Margaret the piece of paper which was so productive of amazement, and which was simply Clinton Maintland's business card that Mrs. Plain had accidentally inclosed with the work she had been doing for Miss Kortright, not missing it until the package had been delivered.

Margaret gave it one glance, let the paper drop from her fingers upon the floor, and turned away from her jubilant companion, the tears filling her eyes.

"Why Mag, what's the matter?" exclaimed Clara, as she noticed Margaret's continued silence. "Crying? Well, I'll declare, I didn't think you were going to take it that hard. Now I wouldn't do anything of the kind. What's the difference? Suppose one lover does turn out to be bad; I'm sure you've got enough left. And he's nothing but an old boy-acquaintance after all. Gordon Seacrist is a great deal nicer. I'd let the worthless fellow go—and his angel, too. Oh, it's such—such a joke!"

And here the impulsive creature went off into another fit of uncontrollable laughter.

Clara was a poor comforter, and Margaret, who really did feel very much hurt, managed as speedily as possible to get off to herself. She then thought the whole matter over. The case did look very dark. Clinton's previous knowledge of the woman, his manifest embarrassment

when she was referred to, and his reticence at the same time concerning her, together with the circumstance of the card, were all very unpleasant points. But Margaret was naturally unsuspicious—Clinton appeared so meritorious and Alice Plain so truthful, there might yet be some mistake about it. She was resolved not to decide adversely without further investigation, and to this end she would see the only person to whom she could look for a full explanation—Alice Plain. Accordingly on the very next day, watching her opportunity when she could steal away without Clara's knowledge, she visited the quarters which she had so benevolently provided for the unfortunate woman. There a new surprise met her. Alice was gone. Both she and her infant had disappeared the evening before. Where they had gone no one could tell. They had simply vanished away. The case—even Margaret was forced to admit it to herself—was made out. The disappearance of Alice Plain, following immediately upon the information Clinton had received of her wrongs being about to be made the subject of an investigation, supplied the one conclusive fact against him. Margaret was driven to the irresistible decision that the story of the missing husband was an ingenious fiction, and that the real culprit was no other than Clinton Maintland.

When Clinton again called at the residence of the Buffords, which he did at as early a day as seemed becoming, he was informed that Miss Kortright was not at home to him.

He was surprised—enraged; but

there might be some mistake about it, and he resolved to try again. Once more he called, and that time, to prevent any misunderstanding, sent in his card. It was returned with the statement that Miss Kortright did not choose to see him then—nor thereafter.

He thought he understood it all. The rich landlord's daughter, having amused herself for the time at his expense, had concluded to have nothing more to do with the poor renter's son.

CHAPTER XII.

TOM SPONGE.

THE morning following his interview with Margaret Kortright, described in the last preceding chapter save one, Clinton Mainland sat in his office in that state of mind usually denominated "brown study." The expression of his countenance indicated a very agreeable train of thought, except when his eye rested on a little slip of paper in his hand, containing the direction he had received from Margaret for finding Alice Plain. Then something of a puzzled look would overspread his visage. He had accepted—unreservedly accepted, the commission that paper imposed; and yet it was obvious enough that the task was not altogether to his liking. Not that Clinton thought of shirking the duty involved—he would just then have rather given his right hand—but he would have greatly preferred that somebody else was charged with its

performance. It was not in the strict line of his profession, the requirements of which now quite fully employed his time; and, while he profoundly sympathized with the unfortunate and injured woman he had promised to assist, he felt that the business of seeking a runaway husband for her was entirely too Quixotic for his taste.

Under such circumstances, it was not strange that a person should enter the room without attracting the attorney's attention. Particularly so, since the step of the new-comer was cat-like, and all his movements betokened the extremest caution. Upon entering, he stood for some time carefully looking about him and giving the master of the apartment a rapid, but thorough, scrutinization. The result of the examination seeming to be favorable, the stranger quietly possessed himself of a chair, and took a seat. Then, having run his hand up and down the bosom of his coat, which was closely buttoned, as if to determine whether everything was safe in that quarter, he gave the signal of his presence by sharply clearing his throat:

"Ugh! ugh!"

Clinton started with surprise, which was not at all diminished by a hasty inspection of the stranger. He was accustomed to singular people, his practice, which was largely criminal, bringing him in contact with many eccentric characters; but here was one belonging to a class that was entirely new.

The visitor was neither old nor young, tall, spare, and had the unmistakable appearance of genteel

seediness. He fixed his eyes upon Clinton with a look that was inquisitive almost to impertinence.

"Your servant!" he at last began.

"Yours," replied Clinton in a tone that was anything but encouraging.

"Ugh! ugh!" resumed the stranger, seemingly not in the least disconcerted. "I see, ugh! you need assistance."

"What do you mean?" demanded Clinton, both a little startled and nettled by such a singular observation.

"Need assistance," went on the visitor unflinchingly. "Young man from the country, I see—brilliant, but raw—in constant danger—liable at every turn in a great city—terrible place, New York—terrible place, ugh!"

"And who are you?" inquired Clinton, none the less annoyed because he concluded that his visitor must be deranged.

"Sponge, ugh!—Thomas Sponge—name in full—Tom Sponge usually called—well known—been in half the offices in town—had prospects once—young—hopeful—flattered—went to the dogs—down now, ugh! A gentleman, but a wreck."

"What do you want?"

"Want to assist you, sir—know the dangers—been through them all—terrible place, New York—terrible place, ugh!"

"And what can you do?"

"Anything, sir—everything—know the town—know the dangers—been through them all—do anything you want, sir—if not satisfactory,

kick me out—don't mind it—not in the least, sir—been kicked out of half the offices in town—that's the beauty of it—a gentleman, but a wreck."

Clinton was now fully enlightened. He had heard of Tom Sponge—heard of him as an unfortunate and needy gentleman, who claimed a connection with the legal profession, and went about among the law offices of the city picking up little jobs of one sort or other, and getting, as he intimated, as many kicks as pennies for his pay. In fact, he recognized in the half-genteel, half-shabby, half cringing, and half consequential, but most persistent, individual before him, a member of a very numerous family, with representatives in almost every business, which, combining wit with folly, energy with sloth, strength with weakness, presumption with cowardice, has led a career of the most reckless variety, invariably ending in failure. Every city is full of such specimens of wrecked humanity. How they live no one exactly knows; but there they are. Owing to his obscurity Clinton had before escaped this universal bore; but now, as a rising man, his turn for the visitation had come. He was on the point of courteously declining the tendered services of one who, according to his own confession, had failed in all his undertakings, at the same time offering some present assistance, which, he judged from the visitor's appearance would not be refused, when his eye fell upon the little slip of paper in his hand.

"Can you play the detective?" he

inquired, as a new idea entered his mind.

"Anything, sir," was the conclusive reply.

"Take that paper, then. It contains the address of a woman whose husband has disappeared, and is to be found. It will be your business to see the wife, get what information you can from her, and go to work at once. If anything comes of it, let me know the result."

"All right, sir! all right! And if I don't satisfy you, just kick——"

"Enough—go to work at once. The case is urgent," interrupted Clinton, who had begun to weary of the interview. "But stop—you can't work on nothing, he added, as, taking out his pocket-book, he handed a ten dollar bill to his new employee.

Sponge unhesitatingly accepted the money, and, having tact enough to see that his company was no longer desired, took himself, although not without a profusion of thanks, out of Clinton's presence.

Thus began an association which, notwithstanding its unpromising introduction, led, as the reader will hereafter learn, to consequences that were of importance to both parties. Sponge had accurately described himself as a wreck; but was not without some of the qualities appertaining to the other character he claimed—that of a gentleman. One of these was gratitude for a favor kindly shown. Poor fellow! having got upon the downward track, favors had become so rare that he had learned to appreciate their value. He had been so kicked and cuffed that his spirit was nearly broken.

In seeking Clinton Maintland's acquaintance, his only object had been to scrape a scanty livelihood by abject service; but the result was an unexpected revelation. To his surprise he found himself treated like a man. Even more to his surprise, he found in time that there was something more than bare existence for him to live for, and the desire to do a man's part began to grow from the debris of his shattered hopes. But of this in due time.

Nor did Clinton have cause to regret the occasion which brought Tom Sponge to his aid. In many ways he fulfilled his promise to be useful. He had, as he claimed, seen and realized all phases of metropolitan life. Thrown upon its surface with prospects that were uncommonly brilliant, he had for a time floated most buoyantly—was courted, flattered, and spoiled, until, carried beyond his depth, he had suddenly sunk to a point from which he was unable to rise. Once going down, he found everything changed. No longer petted, he was insulted and kicked. From that time he had led a precarious, vagabond life, until, seeing in Clinton Maintland a man of growing means and fame, he inferred that he would be in good humor with the world, and so well disposed towards its less lucky members, and had sought him accordingly. While his knowledge on all points was superficial, he had, while following the career of a foot-ball, gained a fund of information, and acquired a degree of cunning, that were likely to prove much more useful to another than to himself. Be-

sides, when, to his surprise, he once more found himself treated with confidence, he was ready to carry service to the very limit of self sacrifice. Becoming an attaché of Clinton Maintland's office, he held himself ready for every emergency that arose. Between him and his employer there was never any positive understanding. All his necessities were liberally supplied, and, as his habits had always corresponded with his opportunities, the compensation he received fully equalled his service.

Quitting the office of his new patron, Sponge lost no time in reaching one of the most fashionable restaurants the city contained. Several cheaper establishments were passed on the way; but of these he took no notice, notwithstanding he had before often patronized them, and in more than one had then an unsettled account. Entering with a lordly step the spacious dining apartment, he seated himself at an empty table, and looked about him with an air of easy confidence.

"Waiter!" he sang out with a voice of such authority that an obsequious attendant was promptly on hand. In an equally imposing manner he gave his order—one embracing the choicest delicacies of the season—and then threw himself into a posture of seemingly unstudied grace until such time as his demands should be complied with. The haste, however, with which he attacked the viands when they appeared, and the rapidity with which he disposed of them, did somewhat detract from the dignity of the proceeding; but

for these slight weaknesses due allowance should be made, when it is known that this was the first time for weeks he had enjoyed a satisfactory meal. Once, indeed, he came near destroying the entire effect of the performance; for growing heated from the exercise of eating, he thoughtlessly opened his coat, and threw himself back in his chair, thus exposing the almost entire absence of any clothing beneath. Fortunately he bethought himself in time, and, by hastily restoring the former status of his garments, avoided consequences which must have been disagreeable in the extreme.

The meal ended, with the most charming nonchalance he laid down the bill he had received from Clinton, handed the attending servant half a dollar out of the change, and slipped what remained—less than half the original amount—into his pocket. After which, having first provided himself with a lighted cigar, he walked leisurely and majestically out of the establishment.

His pace, when again upon the street, showed none of the eagerness he had displayed before his recent feed. Strolling along the avenue, he stopped before various attractive windows, and, with the eye of a connoisseur, inspected their contents, until a noted gentlemen's furnishing establishment having secured his attention, he entered. Here he purchased and paid for a cravat of extraordinarily brilliant colors, and a pair of gloves whose fit was perfectly unexceptionable. He did purchase some other articles of personal attire; but, discovering that his

money was all gone, he had them marked and laid aside until he should return.

Once more upon the street, he sauntered on in the same free and elegant way, until, becoming somewhat heated with his walk, and finding himself at the door of a stylish drinking place, he entered and called for a refreshing beverage. The mixture was received and consumed, when, putting his hand into his pocket, his cheek suddenly lost its color—he had not a cent of money, a circumstance which had totally escaped his recollection—but his embarrassment was but momentary.

“Well! well! I’ll swear, if, in changing my pantaloons, I haven’t left my pocket-book behind. How provoking! You’ll have to leave it until I call again,” he remarked to the man behind the counter.

“Oh, certainly! certainly!” politely replied the bar-tender, an unusually stout-built man; but who was at the same time sharply examining Sponge’s service-tarnished exterior; “it’s not of the slightest consequence—not of the slightest consequence. A word in your ear, if you please.”

With that the man stepped from behind the counter, while Sponge, with an air of condescension, advanced to meet him. But no sooner had the two come within reaching distance, than the first rudely grasped the latter by the collar.

“Left your pocket-book, did ye?” bellowed the assailant, at the same time shaking his astonished captive so as to fairly make his teeth rattle. “Try to come it over me, old fellow,

in that way, will ye? Out of this, and never let me see your sneaking mug again. There!”

At this point, having got Tom to the door, he gave him a shove, assisted with a lift from the tip of his boot, which landed him far out on the sidewalk.

Sponge lost no time, unnecessarily, in gathering himself up, and making off from the scene of his discomfiture. Otherwise, no injury seemed to have been done him in either mind or body. Once out of sight of the place, his air of comfortable nonchalance quickly returned, and not so much as a frown remained upon his brow as he walked slowly on. Nevertheless, he made no further stops before reaching his own quarters.

But, long before arriving at this destination, Tom had turned aside from the fashionable avenue he had been traversing. Worse and worse grew the town as he advanced, until, finally, in one of its very lowest quarters, he disappeared in a structure which was even more unseemly, if possible, than its neighbors.

Here at last we have tracked the wrecked gentleman to his lair, and a wretched place it is. Away up on the fourth or fifth story, immediately below the roof, is a low and desolate apartment. There is but one window to the room, and that is filled with cracked and dusty panes of glass, or even more unsightly substitutes. The floor is uneven and carpetless, and not over clean at that. The walls where the original plastering remains, as it does in scattered patches, are nearly black. The

furniture and adornments are a singular mixture of elegant rubbish and paltry necessities. There is an antique dressing-case, which must once have been an elegant affair ; several swords and foils hanging against the walls, badly rusted and nicked ; half a dozen photographs, one half, of the master of the apartment in various elaborate costumes, the others of richly-attired females, with an unmistakable stagy look, all in frames badly cracked and tarnished ; a venerable morning gown, which must in its day have been decidedly stunning, now sadly faded ; and sundry other useless and cureless articles, evidently relics of a departed splendor, and all so deteriorated as to be beneath a pawn-broker's notice.

But when we come to the essentials, the display is indeed contemptible. There is not a sound chair in the room. In one corner is a wretched apology for a bed, consisting of a hard mattress stretched upon the floor, and covered with a ragged quilt. Near it, and on a chair from which the back has been broken, stand a handleless pitcher and a cracked basin, while a dirty towel swings from a nail in the wall. The only perfect piece of furniture in the room, and one which the proprietor evidently regards as indispensable to its comfort, is a cheap mirror, suspended near the window to catch its best light, in an imitation mahogany frame.

Altogether, it is a most miserable hole for a human being to occupy, and especially for one who not only calls, but considers, himself a gentle-

man. But the present occupant, at the time we are supposed to be watching his proceedings, is clearly not disposed to waste his time in moralizing over his fate. His attention is otherwise employed.

No sooner did Tom Sponge enter his den, than he began to open out and examine his recent purchases. A child with a basket of fresh toys could scarcely have exhibited more delight than this full-sized man, as he held up first his cravat, and then his gloves, between himself and the dusky window, testing each in turn with eye and fingers. The examination having been prosecuted to his satisfaction, he prepared to array himself in his finery. The first movement was to remove his coat, resulting in an exposure which I should blush fully to describe, as the only garment that remained was so fragmentary in its character as scarcely to deserve the name it commonly bears. But Tom was neither intimidated nor disturbed by the display. Taking an unused paper collar from his dressing-case, and adjusting it with his new cravat of brilliant hues about his neck, he stood in pleased contemplation, and in various positions, before his mirror, closely studying the effect, totally indifferent to, if not unconscious of, the melancholy contrast presented by the clinging tatters and bare patches below. Then, his coat having been replaced and closely buttoned, but with the ends of his new cravat flaunting over the collars ; his shoes being rubbed off with an old rag ; his hat polished by his hand, and an indentation or two carefully

pressed out, the climax of the operation was reached in the putting on of the gloves, which proved to be a perfect fit. The man, thus arrayed, stood for a considerable time regarding himself in the uncertain, but therefore none the less flattering reflection of the glass; and really, all things considered, he did present a most genteel appearance.

But attractive as the picture was, even Tom Sponge in time desisted from the contemplation. Other eyes were to be dazzled as well as his own. He was now prepared for business—the business of calling upon a lady on the delicate mission with which he was charged. Accordingly, taking out the little slip of paper he had received from Clinton Maintland, he studied it long enough to get the contents fully impressed upon his mind, and then went forth with a realizing sense of the importance of himself and the occasion.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE STOLEN TREASURE.

LED by the direction contained in the little slip of paper he had received from Clinton, Tom Sponge was not long in presenting himself at the door of a very plain, but decent, boarding-house, where he inquired of a six-year-old girl that opened the door in answer to his ring, for Mrs. Alice Plain.

"This way," exclaimed the little creature, who immediately began to climb a pair of stairs, using hands

as well as feet in the operation, and stopping on every other step to repeat the words to her follower, until two or three flights had been surmounted. Then, running to a door, she began to thump it with all her might, at the same time shouting at the top of her lungs, "Here Miss Plain 's a man a-come fur yer."

The door, at such a startling summons, was partially and cautiously opened, and out peeped a woman's face at which Tom was not a little surprised. He had arrayed himself in his best, partly from the force of habit, and partly from an instinct of gallantry when about to call on a lady, and not that he had expected to meet anything very attractive in an abandoned wife.

But here he found himself face to face with one whom his observation in society informed him at a glance was a person of superior beauty and refinement. Hence, being completely taken aback, he experienced considerable difficulty in explaining his presence, as the lady herself, being equally surprised, said nothing.

"Ugh! Ugh!" he began, with more than ordinary obstruction in his throat, "your servant!"

The lady slightly bowed, but made no other response.

"Am I, ugh! ugh! addressing Mrs. Alice Plain?" inquired Tom.

"That is my name, sir," replied Alice, still keeping herself inside the nearly closed door.

"From Clinton Maintland, ma'am," said Tom, bowing profoundly and handing Alice one of Clinton's business cards which he had managed to pick up.

That name was the "open sesame" both to the apartment and its occupant's confidence. Throwing open the door, with a gracious smile she bade Tom enter.

Once in the room, the visitor had time to collect his thoughts and proceed to an explanation of his business, which he did as soon as he had succeeded in getting his throat in working order.

"I am greatly indebted to your master——" said Alice, by way of beginning a reply to Tom's explanation of his visit, having concluded from her visitor's peculiarity of outfit that he was a servant in livery.

"Master!" exclaimed Tom, fairly bounding from his seat, and fixing his eye upon Alice with great severity. "Ugh! ugh! ugh! not master, but employer, ma'am. Employer, I tell you." Then he added with great impressiveness, "A wreck, but a gentleman, ugh!"

The situation was decidedly embarrassing. How Mrs. Plain was to apologize for her mistake, was yet uncertain, when her baby, which had been peacefully sleeping in its cradle, as luck would have it, startled by Tom's emphatic words, set up a piercing cry. The interruption gave the mother, in her efforts to appease the wailing infant, a chance to drop the subject.

As soon as the little one had been sufficiently quieted, Alice proceeded to give Tom, who drew out paper and pencil and pretended industriously to be taking notes, although he did not make a mark, an account of her meeting with Henry Plain, as her husband called himself, their

marriage, and their married life down to the time of his disappearance.

The narrative finished, the time to close the interview had come. But Tom, who had become more and more interested in the woman as the story of her wrongs progressed, was quite willing to prolong his stay. The baby furnished an excuse. He asked its age, name, and weight, complimented it on its beauty, took it on his knee, and made most diverting faces for its amusement, all the time rattling away most glibly to both mother and child.

"Have no family—(Oh, you little darling, you!)—of my own, ma'am —(chick-a-chuck)—been too busy—(chirp, chirp, chirp)—all my life—(wife, rife, strife)—ever to marry—(ho-the-diddle-do) — down now, ma'am — (chirp, chirp, chirp) — a wreck—(up in a balloon, boys)—but a gentleman, ma'am—(high diddle, the cat's in the fiddle)—yes ma'am, a gentleman — (Oh, what pretty eyes!)—boy or girl?—(whirl, flurl, surl!)—boy, you say—(sony, money, funny)—well, well, well—(round and round we go)—never should have thought it—(a kiss)—never, never, never—(chirp, chirp, chirp.)"

The three got on so well together that, by the time Tom reluctantly rose to take his leave, Mrs. Plain gave him a most grateful smile, as well as many thanks, for his interest in one so humble as herself—and the baby was fast asleep.

But as he stood ready to depart, casting his eye about the apartment, and seeing how plain everything was, Tom involuntarily put his hand into his pocket.

"Will you permit me, ma'am, to offer——"

Here he stopped suddenly and awkwardly, at that point discovering that he had not a cent of money to his name.

"Thank you very much for your liberality, sir," replied Mrs. Plain, "but I want nothing. A lady gives me employment."

Tom stopped to hear no more ; but, although fearfully vexed lest she had discovered his embarrassment and suspected its cause, he went away none the less enchanted with the beauty and the manners of the woman for whom he was to make search for a husband. A husband—Tom's heart told him he would much rather find her a substitute than the original.

No sooner was he gone than Alice laid the sleeping infant in his cradle, softly and sweetly singing a lullaby song ; then, when his slumber seemed to be fully confirmed, glanced gratefully for a few moments at the little piece of pasteboard containing the name and address of Clinton Maintland, which Tom had given her ; after which, hastily gathering together some delicate needle-work upon which she had been laboring, she folded it into a nice, compact bundle, wrapped a piece of paper about it, and tied it securely with a bit of twine, overlooking in her haste the fact that she had enclosed Clinton Maintland's card, and never dreaming of the misapprehension to which that simple act would lead. Then calling the little six-years-old, and charging her carefully to watch the baby while she was gone, as she

would be out but a little while, Alice, having first pressed a kiss which was almost like a breath of air upon the sleeping infant's cheek, hurried away to deliver the parcel which Margaret Kortright had a right to expect.

Little six-years-old stood to her post faithfully, until there was another ring at the street door bell ; and then, as baby was sleeping soundly, away she hurried to admit the new-comer.

This time the visitor was a female, middle-aged, tall and stout, and with a bleary look about the eyes which would have carried suspicion at once to the majority of minds. She asked for Mrs. Plain. Mrs. Plain was out. Did she take the baby with her ? "No marm, I'se left to watch him," was the reply of the little six-years-old, proud of her responsibility. "Then I'll jist step up into her room and wait till she gits back. I'm a friend of the lady's," was the stranger's observation ; and little six-years-old once more climbed the stairs on hands and feet, in the capacity of conductress.

No sooner was the bleary-eyed woman seated in Mrs. Plain's apartment, than, turning to little six-years-old, she remarked, with what she tried to make a smile : "Now I'll take care of baby till mother gits back, and you, me little darlin, can run and play ; and here's a penny to git you some candy, and a shillin to buy you a pretty picter book. There, run away !—run away !"

It required no second direction to send little six-years-old down the stairs and out of the door into the

street, where, with a stick of candy in her hand, she was soon lost in delightful bewilderment before a sidewalk news-stand covered with illustrated periodicals and cheap picture books. She had often stopped in the execution of the most pressing errands, to steal a glance at the wonders of the establishment, without daring to approach within touching distance of the tempting merchandise ; but now, with a whole shilling in her possession, she could go right up to the counter and handle all the pretty things so alluringly displayed, while that kind lady relieved her of all anxiety on account of the charge with which she had been entrusted. For once her time and her money were both her own. It is no wonder, therefore, that in the enjoyment of such unaccustomed freedom, as she turned over the whole stock of illustrated pamphlets, critically examining both the pictorial contents and the covers, without being able to tell one letter from another, and finally weighing with perplexing minuteness the counter attractions of Bluebeard and the Babe in the Manger, a good many minutes should have slipped away.

But no sooner was the little sentinel out of the house, than the stranger approached the sleeping babe, bent over him in such a way as to determine how profound was his repose ; then, that part of the examination proving satisfactory, stepped out into the hall, looked up and down the stairs, listened a moment breathlessly, when she re-entered the room, hastily gathered the still sleeping child upon her arm, threw over

him the corner of a large shawl she was wearing, slipped out of the room and closed the door behind her, hurried quietly down stairs, passed out on to the street, and, gliding along the sidewalk until the nearest corner was turned, approached a closely-curtained carriage, conveniently standing with the driver on his seat, the door of which was opened by a young man seated within as she came forward.

"Got him?" he asked.

"Safe as a dollar," was the woman's reply, as she disappeared inside.

The young man gave a low whistle which the driver evidently understood to be a signal, as he cracked his whip and the carriage went off at a rattling pace.

Alice Plain was absent longer than she had expected to be. Having delivered her package, she discovered on her way homeward that the card she had received from Tom Sponge was missing, and, being anxious to retain the address of one who took such a kindly interest in her affairs, had returned to inquire for it, never dreaming of the mischief she was doing. All this took time, and she hurried to her lodgings with an anxiety almost amounting to a presentiment of evil. Her very breathing ceased, and she all but sank to the floor, as she entered her room, and found that both her child and little six-years-old were gone. Her inaction was but momentary. Rushing wildly into the hall, she began to inquire of every one she met concerning the missing children. No one could give her the least satisfac-

tion, until little six-years-old suddenly appeared on the scene, flourishing a highly-embellished copy of Blue-beard, which had finally gained the victory over the Christ Child, and extravagantly rejoicing in her prize. At last, however, the little creature was induced to sufficiently abate her noisy enthusiasm to give an account of what she knew. Then the whole truth was realized. The babe had been stolen; and the nearly frantic mother, regardless of all suggestions from her sympathizing acquaintances, rushed from the house, and began wildly to inquire of every one she met for information of her child. A curious crowd soon collected about her, and, as soon as it was known what the cause of the sensation was, a half dozen tongues began to tell as many conflicting tales concerning what their owners had seen. One woman, however, had noticed a female, with a babe on her arm, enter a close carriage, in which there was "such a nice young man with glossy black hair, curly moustache, snapping keen eyes, and —"

The mother had caught the words.

"Which way did they go?" she eagerly interrupted.

The woman pointed out the direction, and Alice, breaking through the idle and gossiping circle about her, started wildly down the street that was indicated, and soon was lost sight of in the jostling crowd that thronged the way.

That night, as Tom Sponge was returning to his garret from a neighboring bake-shop with his next day's dinner, done up in a brown paper parcel, under his arm, the purchase

of a few pennies he had luckily come into possession of, his attention was drawn to the eccentric movements of a female evidently laboring under some mental or bodily derangement. He watched her until, coming under a street lamp, her features were suddenly exposed to view. Tom almost dropped his bundle as he recognized a face upon which his mind had been running ever since his visit to Alice Plain. But momentarily surprised and paralyzed as he was, he was not permitted to remain long inactive. The woman staggered on a few steps and then sank apparently helpless upon the sidewalk. What was Tom to do? It did not take him long to decide. Noticing that it was but a few steps to his lodging-house, he rushed forward, raised the woman to her feet, supported her to the street entrance of the building, and then by main strength carried her up the several flights of stairs leading to his room. There he laid her upon his apology for a bed, sprinkled a few drops of water in her face, and entered upon an investigation to discover what was the matter. Alice herself—for she it was—was too much exhausted to offer any explanation; but from the few flighty words she spoke, all referring to her child, he was enabled to guess pretty accurately what had occurred.

"Poor, poor creature!" he exclaimed, the tears standing in his eyes as he stood looking into the sweet but troubled face before him. Then, remembering that he still had a few pennies in his pocket, he hurried down stairs, and soon returned

with a draught, the product of his entire capital, which he supposed would be strengthening to the invalid.

Several days passed over before Alice realized where she was. She was like one in a dream, neither asleep nor awake, her whole system disordered by over-excitement; but during the whole time, had she been a princess, she could have found no more watchful care or delicate attention than she received at the hands of Tom Sponge. True, he was not her only nurse. Having prevailed upon a poor, but kind-hearted, woman occupying a room in the same building to share his charge and perform such offices as a female could alone properly render, he was relieved of some of the burden; but night or day, nothing he could do to minister to her comfort was lacking. Coxcomb he unquestionably was, and everything about his establishment too clearly proved him to be what he rather ostentatiously boasted—a wreck; but no one, witnessing the gentleness of his attentions to that wronged and unfortunate woman and the extent of his self-sacrifice—often going without his own dinner that he might procure for her some needed delicacy—would have denied him the residue of his claim—that he was a gentleman.

When Alice was restored to consciousness, although still very weak, Tom was as truly a comforter to her mind as he had been to her body, awakening hopes of speedily regaining her child through the assistance of the public authorities, with whom he claimed an influence and an intimacy that were hardly justified by

the facts. He could not see her suffer when, by the exercise of his inventive faculty, he possessed the power to bring her relief. It was arranged that, as soon as she was able to be transferred, she should take up her residence with Mrs. Garrett, the woman who had been Tom's assistant, and with whom, for the time, he had exchanged apartments.



CHAPTER XIV.

POVERTY'S FUNERAL.

ALICE PLAIN had fallen into a quiet and refreshing slumber. Tom Sponge, who had merely stepped in to keep watch over the invalid during Mrs. Garrett's absence on some pressing matter of her own, occupied the remnant of a chair, his back against the wall for support—for that portion of the chair which should have supplied that convenience had long before disappeared—with his eyes feasting upon the pale and emaciated, but delicately sweet, countenance of the sleeper. It was an occupation, if such it might be called, Tom greatly delighted in; and which, if the truth must be told, he had latterly given considerable of his time to. He never tired of it when, as at that particular time, he could pursue it without seeming impertinence; for now that the sick woman was restored to mental consciousness, although physically still very weak, it was only at such chance occasions that the privilege was given him. He would not for any consideration have had her know

that he was taking such a liberty. Tom, as we have seen, was the very soul of politeness.

Suddenly he detected a piece of paper in one of Alice's hands, which she, after examining it, had apparently been in the act of restoring to its place in her bosom when sleep had overpowered her. An irresistible curiosity impelled him to ascertain its contents. Noiselessly rising and approaching the bed, he cautiously slipped the paper from her loosened fingers, and ran his eyes over the few lines of writing it contained. It was a marriage certificate, testifying that, on a date some two years before, the subscriber, who described himself as a minister of the Gospel, had joined in the holy bands of wedlock Henry Plain and Alice Spear, and was signed, "David Hedding."

"Ugh! ugh!" said Tom, in an undertone, "a document worth preserving," and a gleam of peculiar intelligence sparkled in his eye. Then, sitting down beside his old dressing-case, which answered the double purpose of secretary and bureau, he began to examine some old letters one of the drawers contained. At last he was enabled to tear from one of them a piece of blank paper in size and appearance closely resembling that on which the certificate had been written. Then, taking pen and ink, he quickly executed an almost *fac-simile* copy—for he was a skillful scribe—and, folding it into the shape of the original, slipped it into the woman's hand, while the other was transferred to a place of security.

The task was hardly completed

before, with a cry of pain and apprehension, Alice awoke. She had been dreaming of danger to her child, and it was some minutes before Tom, with all his efforts to allay her fears, could persuade her that she had seen nothing but a vision. And when he had succeeded in doing so, the returning memory of her real bereavement was almost as poignant as the tortures of her imagination.

"Oh, have you—have you learned—anything?" she imploringly, but doubtfully, inquired, looking up into Tom's face.

The man's eyes filled with tears, and he had to remove several very troublesome obstructions from his throat before he could answer.

"No, Mrs. Plain; nothing definite *yet*"—laying particular stress on the last word, as he saw the look of pain that shot over her features—"nothing yet; but the Chief of Police assures me that he thinks he has found a clue. I was waiting for Mrs. Garrett to return, that I might go and see him."

"Oh, do not delay—not a minute—on my account!" exclaimed the woman excitedly. "I can get on very well alone—I am so strong now. Oh, why don't you go!"

Tom was constrained to take his departure—for the sick woman's impatience was fast taking the form of petulance—although he would much have preferred remaining where he was, as the "clue" he referred to was purely his own invention, evoked not so much from any spirit of untruthfulness, as from an over-abundance of pity for the suffering mother. After considerable delay, caused first

by his anxiety to see that the invalid had everything essential to her comfort—water by her bedside, her pillow readjusted, a soothing tincture within reach; and then by some little attentions to his own personal appearance—all very necessary when about to interview such an important dignitary as the Chief of Police—he left the room, and the sad, stricken woman was alone with her sorrow, while Tom made his way to Clinton Maintland's office to report progress there, totally regardless of what he had just been saying about the Police Department.

Alice was not long to remain alone.

Hearing the door cautiously opening, she languidly turned her tearful eyes in the direction of the sound, expecting to behold the portly person and broad visage of Mrs. Garrett, and met the bold, but searching glance of—Gordon Seacrist.

"Oh, Harry!" she exclaimed with joyful surprise, "have you—have you, indeed, come back?" raising herself up in her excitement, and stretching out her arms, but falling back, exhausted by the effort.

"Now stop," said Gordon, coldly, stationing himself at a little distance from the bed, and deliberately surveying the wasted woman. "Don't you try that again. I see you are not strong—and, besides, such demonstrations are useless on this occasion, as I have come purely on business."

"My child!" weakly faltered the woman, speaking as if she had fully felt the chilling words just addressed to her. "You have my child!"

"Exactly," replied Gordon, in the same sardonic tone. "You come to the point at once. I have your child; and he is safe where you will never get him—except with my permission."

"Oh, let me have him! Let me have him!"

"Very well; you shall have him," coldly responded Gordon to this outburst of maternal feeling, "for you, undoubtedly, think a good deal more of the brat than I do. But it shall be on one condition only. Listen, Alice Plain, or Alice Spear, whichever you choose to call yourself. You have a certain paper which I wish to get. It's the proof of that little game you played on me when you forced me to go through the marriage ceremony in presence of a real priest, before you would let me have possession of you. It was exceedingly well done on your part. You had the power then, for you had bewitched me. Now the tables are turned. I have the power now, because your child is in my hands. That baby is my trump card. So I propose to get even with you, and say quits. If you will give me the paper, you shall have the baby. There—those are my terms."

"You shall have it—you shall have it," eagerly exclaimed Alice, putting her hand in her bosom; but, quickly withdrawing it, as she added, "but where is my child?"

"Not far off," replied Gordon. "You needn't be afraid I'm trying to cheat you this time. I tell you it's on the square. However you shall be satisfied."

With that he stepped out of the

room, closing the door behind him, and soon returned in company with the woman who had purloined the infant in the first place. Very quietly reposing upon her arm, as if in deep sleep, was the baby.

"Let me have him—let me have him!" cried Alice, starting up in her bed, as she caught a glimpse of the child, and, at the same time, holding out towards Gordon the paper Tom Sponge had put in her hand.

"Stop," said Gordon, stepping in between the two women in such a way as to intercept the mother's view of the babe. "Not so fast. One word more, before this business is closed. Alice Spear—because that, from this time on, might as well be your name—for mine isn't Plain, and never was—I want you distinctly to understand that this transaction finally and forever dissolves all partnership between us. That paper in your hand is the only existing evidence of our marriage. The minister that tied the knot is dead. That paper in a few minutes will be destroyed, and it will be of no use for you ever afterwards to try to find me, or say anything to me. I won't know you. You are to be perfectly free, and can get another husband in the same way you got me, if you want to. I'm sorry to find you in this condition—on my soul I am—and I only regret that I'm not able to do better by you. That's all the money I can spare." And he threw upon the bed a roll of bills, with a curse, spoken in an undertone, upon somebody, the name sounding very much like Cummager.

Of the speech just spoken Alice

understood very little. Her whole mind was upon her child, as she sat holding the paper in her outstretched hand.

"All right!" said Gordon, after he had received and glanced over the document. "All right! let her have the urchin."

With a cry of delight Alice received the infant from the other woman, and began to press kiss after kiss upon its little face. But her exclamation of joy was speedily followed by one of rage and terror. The little one gave no response to her caresses.

"You have killed my child! You have killed my child! You are murderers—both of you," she fiercely shouted.

"Murderers is it?" exclaimed Gordon's companion, flaming up and taking a step menacingly towards her accuser. "Murderers, do ye say? It's false. He's no more dead than ye are yerself, madam. Only doctored a bit to keep him quiet. If he's a trifle thinner than when I got him, it's his own fault; for he wouldn't take to me at all—at all. Murderers——"

But by this time her employer's hand was upon the woman's shoulder, and his voice sounded in her ear:

"Stop your noise, can't you? and let's be out of this."

With that Gordon and the woman hastily left the chamber. Hurrying down stairs, they entered a carriage that was in waiting on the street, and were rapidly driven away. They had proceeded but a few blocks, however, before the vehicle was

stopped, and Gordon, handing the woman a roll of money, said :

"Now, out of this ; and never let me see you again until I send for you. Recollect that I have the power to send you to the gallows, if you blab a word. You are not only a child-stealer, but you killed—you know who—and I can prove it. There, go !"

The woman descended without a word and hurried away.

The child did "come round"—that is, it was with considerable effort restored to consciousness, but never more to its wonted bloom and strength. The shock it had received was too much for its delicate organization. Only beyond the Great River, where it was soon to be received among the Celestials, was it to regain that brightness of which it had been so rudely bereft. Yet day after day it lingered before the spark went out, and left a depth of darkness in a mother's soul that was more terrible than the grave.

During those days of awful suspense, it would have been difficult to tell who was the greater sufferer, the sorely-tried and almost demented mother, or Tom Sponge. There was nothing the latter could do to lighten the burden of the other, which he did not willingly and anxiously do. He never seemed to think of any self-deprivation as a sacrifice. His bearing was that of the most devoted, but, at the same time, most chivalrous friend.

A few days went by, and there was a funeral from the rickety tenement in which Tom had his habitation. It was a very small—a really

insignificant affair. It was a child's funeral, and there was but one coach, and but three persons besides the coffined little one in it. The cemetery was reached—not one of those splendid burial sites which are made not merely beautiful, but cheerful by the hand of art—but a lonely spot set apart for the ingathering of the nameless dead. There a heart-broken mother was upheld beside a baby's grave by Mrs. Garrett on the one hand, and by Tom Sponge on the other. And when the hasty sepulture was over—for there was no priest to stay the work—only two rough, sweaty laborers in working dress—that woman so fearfully bereft—so cruelly wronged—was borne from the spot, too faint to be her own support, by the willing arm of a luckless "wreck," the only faithful and disinterested friend she had in all the world.

Still it must not be supposed that Tom Sponge was anything other than what he had always been. He had made the most elaborate preparation compatible with his means for the occasion. His neck-tie of gorgeous colors was conspicuously displayed. His gloves were faultlessly adjusted, and—the grandest incident in his career for many a day—through Clinton Maintland's munificence, he was enabled to appear for the first time in a bran-new coat, an exact fit, and in the very latest fashion. Good Mrs. Garrett was arrayed in simple calico ; but Tom was magnificent in broadcloth, and a wide strip of crape, foppishly knotted with a great bow, floated grandly from his arm.

CHAPTER XV.

A SHORT CHAPTER.

Thus far my story has resembled a picture gallery, in which the examiner is, perhaps, treated in one observation to a broad and quiet landscape; in the next to a rough and sterile mountain; in the third to a rich and populous city; while the fourth, is, possibly, a dreadful battle scene with dying men and rearing horses, and all the other sad and bad accompaniments of horrid war. There is no conceivable connection between them as they are separately looked upon, each being a perfect picture in itself. But all, nevertheless, may be thoroughly truthful transcripts of scenes and incidents within the same, and that a by no means extensive, territory. It only needs the filling up of the intermediate spaces to make the harmony complete.

The writer of these pages has introduced sundry parties, some of whom, he hopes, have secured the reader's sympathy, and all of whom have, doubtless, awakened some measure of interest; but in groupings so distinct as to suggest the question, what imaginable connection can there be between them? In so much of the tale as remains to be told, the author trusts to be able to vindicate the consistency of his work, by exhibiting a view broad enough to take in all the glimpses already given, and demonstrate the necessity of each to the whole. But before entering upon this part of his task, he deems it advisable to follow the ex-

ample of play-wrights, who, in the exercise of their art, are accustomed, at some point in the performance, to drop the curtain upon the stage and give their audience a breathing spell, while the movement of the comedy is presumed to be unbroken, indicating in the bills the precise period at which the piece will be resumed, with a brief epitome of the intermediate occurrences.

Before the curtain again rises upon the *dramatis persone* of this story in a second Book, the period of twelve months is supposed to have gone round. In that time Barton Seacrist has been a candidate for the mayoralty of New York, notwithstanding his own urgent plea for rest from the excitement of political strife, and has been beaten through the defection, at the last moment, of the Mohicans, under the leadership of Abel Cummager. One of the "points" in contemplation by father and daughter had temporarily failed. Nevertheless, a dinner to his friends was given by the unsuccessful, but still cheerful aspirant to civic honors, at which he was once more enthusiastically nominated for the place, and which, to the surprise of every one except Barton Seacrist, was attended by Abel Cummager.

To other parties that have been brought to the reader's notice, the interval passed over had brought results of yet deeper interest. The second Book opens upon Clinton Maintland in the full tide of a successful professional career, looked upon by every one as a most prosperous man, and by himself as the happiest of mortals; for it finds

him the accepted suitor of the brilliant Kate Seacrist.

Fortune, too, had favored the wooing of another of our acquaintances. Margaret Kortright had pledged her hand to Gordon Seacrist. The victory had been won only at the end of a long and arduous siege, attended with numerous gallant attacks and mortifying repulses. The assailant would, probably, have given up the struggle as hopeless, had he not possessed within the beleaguered works a devoted ally in Clara Bafford, who grew more pronounced in Gordon's cause, the more desperate it appeared. Both of their efforts,

however, would have been unavailing, but for the confusion into which Margaret was thrown by her loss of confidence in Clinton Maintland. As her good opinion of one man had proved fallacious, she naturally inferred that her bad opinion of another might be equally wrong. Charity begat sympathy, and Gordon's extreme plausibility, with Clara's constant indorsement, in time compelled the surrender of a but languidly defended heart.

As for Tom Sponge, the latest but not least of the heroes introduced upon the stage, he was still Tom Sponge.

BOOK SECOND.

CHAPTER I.

THE MARROW IN THE BONE.

FROM so much of this tale as has already been told, it will be seen that its principal hero has safely crossed the breakers that fringe the sea of city life, and is now apparently sailing in smooth waters. To this point he has been piloted chiefly by an education which led him instinctively to shun the grosser temptations that lie, some bare and threatening like out-cropping rocks, and others hidden beneath a placid and deceitful surface, all over the main to which he has entrusted his bark. But his initial success must be ascribed in part, at least, to a positive power capable of enforcing progress in the face of opposing obstructions, as well as to the influence of a restraining guardianship. Clinton Mainland's triumph, up to the point to which we have borne him company, would never have been possible but for this one fact—and it is the crowning secret of every young man's success who alone and unaided has made his way to fortune in New York—that he entered with a defi-

nite object in view, and stubbornly adhered to it through every discouragement. In that way he was enabled to shun the two supremest perils that await all hazarding a city's experience, who may have escaped the dissipations that overwhelm so many at the outset, or undermine them when their feet have seemingly reached the solid land.

One is the temptation to join the impetuous throng who chase Fortune at the call and cheer of a mad and bewildering spirit of speculation. In the midst of that deep whereon we have seen our youthful voyager risk his course, there is an island, and on it a palace whose walls are of solid gold, and whose summit, blending with the rays of the sun whose brightness its earth-born glories rival, lifts the imagination into regions of unattainable splendor. The voices that issue from it, sounding like peals of wildest and merriest laughter, seem to be the culmination of earthly happiness. He who hears those Circean calls, as he drifts in the path of the storm, or lies becalmed upon the sullen waters, longs to leap upon the shore, and, like the gold-hunters of old, burning his

vessel behind him, rush at once through the palace's broad open portal, and join in the revel and the riot within. If he does, he finds that only madmen are there; that the sounds he took to be laughter and sallies of delight, are voices of rage and despair; that the inmates are simply desperate combatants, rending and tearing each other, each seeking to trample his brother under foot. They are worshippers of Mammon, that evil god who, inspiring his followers with his own malignant and mischievous spirit, makes sport of their folly, even as he adds to its flame. Like the fabled one who scattered golden apples as the seeds of discord in her path, the divinity to whom this temple has been reared, casts among his adorers the bauble of sudden wealth, and laughs to see them struggle for its possession—and never so loudly as when the strongest and craftiest, crushing the weaker under his feet, exultingly seizes the prize, only to find it melt into thin air in his grasp. Thus does the battle go on forever.

And yet, strange to say, such is the atmosphere of the place that the new-comer, even as he beholds the dead and the dying all about him, is quickly seized with the prevailing infatuation, and rushes madly into the thickest of the fray.

The other danger to which allusion has been made, is scarcely less enticing and fatal. Whoever has studied Cole's magnificent picture of Youth, in his unrivalled Voyage of Life—and who is there that has not?—remembers with what eagerness the boyish hero of the canvas

pursues the baseless vision of that castle in the air which emblemizes Fame. So the adventurer upon the sea we have been contemplating, growing weary and sick at heart as he waits for the breeze which is to bear him onward, and dazzled by a mirage-like prospect of surpassing promise, is tempted to turn from his course and go in quest of a prize even more difficult of attainment than princely wealth. He would reach the shrine of Literary Fame. He sees the splendid structure, with its glittering spires and beauteous porches, apparently resting on the summit of the nearest mountain, the sides of which would seem to offer no obstruction to his feet. But if, abandoning his appointed way, he undertakes the ascent, he finds impediments, before unseen and undreamed of, at every step. The trials of the literary aspirant, who, feeling that he has within him the merit of success, meets only repulse, disappointment and unappreciation, become his in all their bitterness, and none are so hard to bear. Partial achievement is even more aggravating than utter failure, leaving its victim the starving slave of inexorable hopes.

From these two dangers, which, without wholly varying the imagery employed, may be described as the Scylla and Charybdis to every seeker after Fortune, who with a not dishonorable ambition, trusts himself to the tortuous currents of a city's drifting tide, it will be seen that our hero has escaped. Heaven preserved him from both!

But is he yet secure? Do not pe-

rils await the successful man? Alas, in that great and selfish metropolis which we have seen the youthful candidate for life's most cherished blessings enter and resolutely battle with, the number who have gone down in shipwreck, even after the perils already enumerated have been safely passed, tell of others even more insidious that remain. Many or few, however, it is the writer's purpose now to allude to but one.

It is not until a man has begun to be successful that Politics seeks him out. Before that time, whatever his merit, he may woo her attentions in vain. She has neither eyes nor ears to give him. But no sooner does the world begin to smile upon him, than the most dangerous of all Sirens—the most heartless and faithless of all coquettes—sets up her song of invitation and spreads her net in his pathway, and few there be among the young men of the land strong enough to withstand her fascination.

And why should politics be a source of danger to any one under a government like ours? There can be no more beautiful system than we possess. Here justice and virtue are always triumphant, for the people rule. The will of the majority is the supreme law. Men are chosen to stations of honor and trust with sole reference to merit. The honest and capable are promoted—the undeserving cast down. Distinction and power are the rewards of the faithful, while punishment is swift to overtake the violator of public or private right. Integrity is the rule of official life and practice—knavery the exception—for the perfection of

human wisdom has at last been attained. Surely there can be no risk in honorable ambition, where a theory at once so grand and so simple prevails. So has argued many a brave and trustful spirit, when all the world seemed beckoning on to high endeavor; and, so arguing, has entered upon the most tortuous, the most perilous of all the paths open to the youth of the land.

CHAPTER II.

TAMMANY.

"TAMMANY, ugh! I know all about Tammany."

And Tom Sponge went into a throat-clearing operation which was always premonitory of a coming shower of words. He was still at heart the same impulsive, thoughtless vagabond, to whom the reader was introduced in the preceding Book, but—twelve months having gone round—externally how changed! The creature which is one day a miserable grub and the next sports a glorious butterfly, has undergone no more startling transformation than had overtaken this random specimen of New York's hand-to-mouth adventurer. He was utterly dependent for everything he had upon the bounty of Clinton Maintland, to whom he had managed to make himself both agreeable and expensive; but, for all that, had he been a millionaire in his own right, he could not have been more resplendent in a complete outfit of the very latest fashion. His bosom, so long

condemned to obscurity by the rags that had partly covered it, was now a bank of snowy whiteness, bordered by the deep carnation of a brilliant vest, while over all the long streamers of his delicately spotted neck-tie swayed to and fro as he spoke, like waving branches full of apple blossoms. But the crowning splendor, after all, was an extensive breast-pin of the purest wash and glass, recently purchased, which had taken the long vacated place of a similar decoration of real gold and diamond that had years before been consigned to the pawn-broker, and never redeemed.

His companion, on the occasion of his present appearance, was no other than Clinton Maintland, who, having a leisure hour, was in the humor to be amused by Tom's rambling talk.

"Yes sir, I know all about Tammany. I've gone through Tammany's mill. I've been crushed—ground to powder—pulverized—and Tammany did it. It's a dreadful despot, I tell you—Tammany is; and the man who submits to its control, puts his neck under a tyrant's heel. He'll be trampled on sooner or later if he dares to have a soul of his own. Tammany brooks no freedom of thought or action. Whoever consents to wear its harness, must keep step in the traces or be run over.

"You don't know Tammany's history, do you? I'll tell you: It sprung from the brain of Aaron Burr. Its father was a wizard, and its mother a bawd. The child has been a devil. Its whole life has been a lie. Under the pretence of

defending popular rights, it has aimed at absolute political control. In the name of freedom it has practiced the most despotic centralization. Under the mask of democracy it has established an oligarchy as complete as the Doges of old Venice. Its Sachems are kings, wearing scalp-locks instead of crowns. They cover over their operations with the trickery of the clown. They tickle the people that they may more successfully rob them. Oh, it was a deep invention to dress up the men who were to be our masters in paint and feathers! The masses like to be thus imposed upon. They are pleased with the idea of primitive simplicity. They think it betokens honesty. They will submit to imposition from Indians they would never tolerate from white men. It was a scheme worthy of Burr or the devil—whichever was its originator.

"Tammany, I tell you, has always been a tyrant. It opposed Hamilton and shot him. It opposed De Witt Clinton, and finally killed him. It opposed me—Tom Sponge—and crushed me, insignificant as I was. It will oppose and crush any one it can who has a mind and a soul of his own. It tolerates no political freedom, because it knows no moral principle. It is a corporation, soulless and absolute. It knows no motive above self. It recognizes no standard higher than interest. It believes every man has his price, and its policy is to buy when it cannot drive or wheedle. It reduces everything to a commercial basis. It is organized corruption. It uses men while it can profitably, and then re-

jects heartlessly. To seek its service is to enter the market. If you want to remain a free man, keep out of its clutches. If you want to sell yourself to Satan, go to Tammany as the purchaser."

"Silence, Tom!"

The words betrayed just the slightest trace of anger. Clinton had supposed that he was proof against irritation on account of anything Sponge might say. He even, occasionally, liked to hear him rail out in his loose and reckless style. But, at the same time, he was a Democrat; all of his political predilections were on the side to which Tammany belonged; and, besides, he expected soon to be the son-in-law of the most powerful of all the Tammany Sachems. It is no wonder, therefore, that his temper was touched. But, the next moment, discovering the folly of taking offence at anything Tom Sponge might say, he added, with a little laugh:

"Nonsense, Tom! you talk like a crazy man; or, what is more unreasonable still, a disappointed one."

Now Tom, strong as his feeling was against Tammany, was not one to quarrel with his bread and butter on a mere matter of opinion; so he added in an apologetic tone:

"I speak strongly, because I feel deeply. I have been a victim."

"Very well, Tom, let us have your story," rejoined Clinton, completely restored to good humor. "I see that you are bursting full of it."

"Ugh! ugh! You must know that I once had prospects, ugh! friends, ugh! money, ugh! as I think I have told you once already."

"Fifty times at least; but what had Tammany to do with their loss?"

"Everything! Everything! Listen! When I was a somewhat younger man than I am now—well, about your age—there were few young men in New York who presented a more superb appearance than 'Dandy Tom Sponge,' as I was called. I wore the neatest boots, the truest kids, the gayest vests, the loveliest neck-ties, the——"

"But what had Tammany——"

"I am coming to that. As may be inferred, I was admired, courted, petted—especially by the ladies. I had my little affairs as well as other gentlemen of taste—might have married a dozen fortunes—first families—and all that sort of thing—but——"

"But what?"

"I had a heart."

"A heart—but what had that to do with Tammany?"

"Why, you see, I had become acquainted with one of the sweetest, purest, loveliest, dearest creatures. Oh, I tell you, she was a star, a gem, a—ugh!—a——"

"Venus?"

"Yes, yes! a perfect goddess—only she had a father."

"Nothing very remarkable in that!"

"But Adelia's parent was a Democrat—a Tammany Democrat—he was in the Street Department—and I—I had been a Whig; then a Know-Nothing; then a Free Soiler; then a Republican. You see I had political principles."

"Plenty of them, I discover."

"Now Adelia's parent had resolved that nobody should marry his daughter but a Democrat; and, what was still more embarrassing, I found that Adelia herself—ah, she was an adorable creature!—was of the same determination. So, you see, I had either to surrender my soul's consolation or my political convictions. You can imagine the struggle."

"Love vs. Principle."

"At last Love conquered—when, indeed, did it fail to do so?—and Adelia made me the happiest man in the world."

"What! did she marry you?"

"No; but she said I was such a nice, handsome man, when I informed her of my change of views. I have told you, I believe, that I dressed elegantly in those days."

"Yes; but go on. I am getting interested."

"Tammany——"

"But what had Tammany to do with it?"

"Well, it all happened in this way: Adelia so impressed me with my superior looks, that I thought I ought to have a position commensurate with my merits. I was never made for obscurity. Accordingly my mind turned to the Bench. I had read law a little, and had been admitted to the Bar, although I had never burdened myself with the drudgeries of the practice. But then my figure and my outfit. There could be no doubt of my qualifications. I submitted the matter to Adelia, and she fully agreed with me. She said she was resolved to marry a Judge. It would be so nice to have one's husband sit up like a

monument, and all the people address him as 'Your Honor.' So it was settled that I was to go on the Bench, and we were to be married as soon as I was Judge Sponge. There didn't seem to be any difficulty about it, as I was now a good Democrat. All I needed was to have the Tammany nomination, and to obtain that I went to work. I saw every leading man in the Tammany Association; gave a dinner to one; a supper to another; laid a wager with a third that I was certain to lose; bought a fourth out and out; and not only placed every man under obligation to me, but got his solemn promise—his solemn promise, remember—to do all he could for me. Well, would you believe it? such is the treachery there is in that organization, when the time for the nomination came, they selected a man who looked more like a monkey than a Judge—no figure, and without even the taste to dress himself decently—actually giving me the go-by, on the pretence that I was lacking in qualifications."

"As you might infer, that was more than I could stand. My principles would not suffer me to remain in association with men guilty of such duplicity. I went back to my old political associates, received the nomination from them, and went before the people on my merits."

"Your looks, you mean."

"Well, well; it was pretty much the same. There was a tremendous contest—nothing ever like it in New York—immense excitement—grand rallies—big speeches—heavy betting, etc., etc., as the newspapers say. I

took the stump in my most elegant outfit ; and I tell you I produced a sensation. I told the people I didn't care a fig for the office—that I was merely fighting their battle against a political monopoly and mass of corruption. I gave Tammany no quarter, I assure you. So damaging were my assaults that my adversaries, becoming alarmed, raised a mob and drove me from the stand with rotten apples and stale eggs, completely ruining my costliest suit. I then bought up a newspaper, wrote my own puffs, and so lampooned the enemy that the publisher was indicted for libel. But for the frauds to which Tammany resorted I should certainly have been triumphantly elected. As it was, I was beaten ; and the most remarkable thing about it, by just Twenty Thousand Majority."

"Why, what is there remarkable in that number?"

"Simply this : that it was the precise majority on which the Tammany men made their bets."

"Singular, I confess."

"Conclusive—perfectly conclusive, I say."

"But Adelia?"

"Oh, she married the Judge—my adversary. It was a terrible blow, I assure you. It completely shattered my heart. But that was not the worst. The canvass took all my money ; for when I was fighting for principle, I did not stop to calculate expense. And when my money was gone, I found my friends were gone. I became simply Tom Sponge, the wreck and vagabond, to be kicked by everybody with the soul to kick

the dog that comes in his way ; and precious few I've found without it. That's what Tammany has done."

"A very hard case, I admit," remarked Clinton, struggling hard to retain a sober countenance, "but I don't yet see that you have made out a case against Tammany, although you found some of its members untrustworthy."

"Not made out a case!" exclaimed Tom, springing excitedly to his feet, and laying his hand solemnly upon his heart. "Wait till you have become a victim. Wait till you are crushed beneath the tyrant's heel, as I have been ; and, as a man of integrity and independence, sooner or later, you are pretty certain to be, and then decide whether or not I have made out a case."

"Well, well!" said Clinton soothingly, "I do not discover that you are so badly crushed after all."

"Perhaps not," answered Tom, as he at that moment caught the reflection of his elaborately dressed person in a looking-glass suspended from the wall. "I certainly do not feel so much so since I have had on these clothes. It is marvellous how being respectably dressed does lift a man up. I begin to think that I may be of use to somebody in the world yet—a wreck, but a gentleman, you know."

"No doubt of it," answered Clinton. "But now I see my time for talk is ended. I have an engagement."

With that our young Democrat took the gentlemanly "wreck" by the hand, shook it warmly, and then, as per appointment, started to pay a

lover's visit to a Tammany Sachem's daughter.

CHAPTER III.

HE MUST SERVE.

"No doubt of it. Let that measure be secured, and all we have been working for is within our reach; nay, more than we have even dared to hope for. The State of New York rules the country; the city of New York rules the State; Tammany rules the city, and—we rule Tammany. What limit need there be to our power?"

The speaker smiled complacently; but his companion continued to wear a look of more than usual seriousness. The speaker was Barton Seacrist; his companion was his daughter Kate. The two had been discussing a scheme that had commanded their most earnest consideration.

"You forget that we have yet to obtain the favorable action of the Legislature before the project can in any wise avail us," was Kate's depreciative response to her father's observation.

"No, Kate, I do not forget. I have considered, and, I think, fully provided for that point. As the Legislature is certain to be constituted, we need, to obtain from it whatever action we desire, only one thing, and that is to have as a member of that body the proper party to look after our interests. He must be one competent in debate, agreeable in manner, not enough of a partisan to excite political opposition, and so tho-

roughly devoted to us that there can be no question of his fidelity."

"But where is such a one to be found?"

"I know the man."

"Who, father?"

"Clinton Maintland."

The blush which sprang to the brow of Kate Seacrist at the mention of that name quickly faded, and was succeeded by a shade of unusual pallor, as she somewhat hesitatingly responded:

"But are you convinced that Clinton will consent to serve in the capacity you mention? There are features in that scheme I should expect him to disapprove of. As my future husband, I could almost wish that he would decline the commission."

"He must serve."

"He must serve," Barton Seacrist repeated even more emphatically after a momentary pause. "He must be made to see that his interest as well as ours is involved—very deeply involved."

Although Kate plainly winced at these words, as she said nothing in reply, her father went on.

"Even should he fail to be convinced by me, he will hardly be able to withstand such arguments as you will bring to bear upon him. I am not afraid to trust him to your eloquence."

These last words were accompanied with a glance of such significance that Kate visibly colored under it, the blush again fading into a troubled, almost startled look.

"Oh, father, I fear that you do not know Clinton Maintland as I

do!" she exclaimed. "He is not one of the parties you are accustomed to deal with. There is something better, nobler, purer in his nature than belongs to the men with whom we are daily brought in contact, and who do our work without asking or caring what principle is involved. I would not for anything have him know that I was familiar with some of the provisions of the measure we have been considering—much less had suggested a portion of them."

Barton Seacrist looked at his daughter curiously, searchingly, but with no sign of relinquishing his purpose, before he replied. Then his response went only to her last remark:

"No necessity, girl, that he should know you have any part in the matter. Can't a daughter advocate her father's views on general principles, without knowing or caring what they are? It is filial duty for her to do so. Clinton, I say, must serve."

A few hours after the foregoing conversation, in the same room in which it had taken place, were seated Barton Seacrist and Clinton Maintland. The manner of the first was very gracious, almost patronizing. He took the lead in the talk, beginning with some general observations which, although seemingly spoken without design, were excellently calculated to arouse any political ambition the younger man might entertain. The advantage—the duty—of competent persons, and particularly of young men, actively participating in public affairs, were skillfully set forth, accompanied with a remark regretfully and feelingly

referring to the speaker's declining strength. There was work to be done, he said, for which he began to feel himself incompetent. Other and stronger hands were needed where his had been employed. Gradually the conversation was made to turn on matters nearer personal, and step by step the leading features of the scheme which the speaker and his daughter had so shortly before been discussing, were cautiously unfolded. Then, before the listener had opportunity to express any opinion of his own, Barton Seacrist proposed to Clinton that he should consent to enter the State Legislature, and there give his support to the measure.

At first, a surprised, and then a troubled, expression appeared on Clinton Maintland's countenance. Hurriedly and somewhat awkwardly he began to declare his indisposition for a public life, and his desire to confine himself to his profession. This objection, which had evidently been anticipated, was at once met in a way which precluded any further reliance upon it. Clinton had now to deal with one who was a thorough master of the tactics involved in such a discussion.

"The measure is one which I consider necessary—absolutely necessary to myself and my friends."

These words were spoken in a cold, measured tone, while the speaker's eye, so clear and penetrating, never turned from the young man's countenance. It was unnecessary for Barton Seacrist to add, "And are you, who are about to become a member of my family, unwilling to

make that much sacrifice for me and mine?" Clinton felt the full force of the implication. The color mounted quickly to his face, and for a time he seemed to be contending with a state of indecision which his wily companion was quick to notice, and which he greeted with a look that was half way between a smile and a sneer. The struggle, however, was but brief. Clinton saw the folly of further evasion. Mustering all his resolution, and raising his eyes with an expression so calm and determined that even Barton Seacrist's sank before them, he went on to speak :

"But, Mr. Seacrist, there are certain features belonging to the scheme suggested which I could not conscientiously indorse. The effect of the measure, it seems to me, would be to take from the people powers rightfully belonging to them, that they might be given over to a few individuals. I am a Democrat, and to favor such a proposition would do violence to the principles I have most firmly cherished. Really, I must be excused from such service."

"Oh, certainly," replied the old man, with a gracious smile, but at the same time with a nervous twitching of his thin and colorless lips, "I could not insist, when your unwillingness rests on that ground ;" and he quickly and skillfully turned the conversation into another channel. He continued to talk on most pleasantly until Clinton rose to depart. Then, looking after the young man's departing form, as an expression of unusual perplexity gathered on his brow, he exclaimed, speaking to himself, but aloud :

"More troublesome than I supposed ; but Kate must bring him round — Kate must bring him round !"

The next interview to which the reader is to be made a witness was between Clinton Mainland and Kate Seacrist. It occurred soon after the one just described. Kate was uncommonly, almost startlingly, pale, but, therefore, none the less interesting in her lover's eyes ; and her manner was languishing, instead of, as ordinarily, full of sparkle and vivacity. Was she indisposed ? She admitted that she did not feel strong. Did she wish to be left alone ? No, no, no ; and her eyes more than confirmed the language of her lips. It was incumbent upon her affianced, consequently, to be more than usually devoted in his attentions. There was no repulse from Kate, although her previous policy had been to hold her lover to a prudent reserve. First his arm encircled her waist ; then a kiss was taken ; then another ; then her form, but a plaything in his strong arms, was transferred to his knee ; and finally her head rested confidently upon his shoulder. But at this crisis Clinton was astonished to find that his companion was in tears. Immediately flashed upon his mind the conviction that the source of her depression was not so much bodily as mental. Was she unhappy ? She did not deny it. What was the matter ? It was nothing. But nothing sometimes means a great deal, and Clinton was not to be thus put off. And so, finally, but most reluctantly, Kate confessed that the matter was that

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her father was seriously disturbed by Clinton's refusal to do some small service he had asked. Clinton was surprised—grieved at the intelligence; but did Kate know the principle that was involved in her father's request, and the reason which had led her lover to decline compliance? No, no, she did not know, and she did not want to know. She only knew that her father would not ask anything that was wrong or very unreasonable, and that she was very unhappy. But she must listen, that she might understand the ground her lover had for his decision. No, she would not listen; she now knew that Clinton did not love her, or he would not refuse what was so little to him, but so much to her; and, slipping out of his arms, she was on the point of hurrying from the room.

"Oh, Kate, you do me wrong!" he exclaimed appealingly, springing to his feet and intercepting her. "Listen but for one moment. There is nothing I would not do for *you*."

He hardly knew—certainly did not consider—what he was saying. Nor was opportunity given for either withdrawal or qualification.

"Oh, thanks! thanks for those words! I knew that you would not refuse *me*."

And, as she spoke, springing toward him, Kate threw her arms passionately about Clinton's neck, and buried her face in his bosom, continuing to faintly murmur words of thankfulness. Clinton pressed her warmly to him, and held her in a long, long embrace, before the thought of his own blunder, or her

mistake, occurred to him; and then it seemed so hard to undeceive her. What should he do? he asked himself. The sweat gathered upon his brow, as he continued to stand in a state of pitiable indecision, with the head of her he loved nestling near his heart. But he was not prepared to surrender his honest convictions, even yet.

"Kate, dearest Kate!"

The tone in which the words were spoken sounded harsh from compulsory firmness; but what was intended to follow remained unuttered.

The girl, at the sound of his voice, gave a slight, convulsive start, looked up in his face in a sort of wandering way, and then sank to the floor at his feet in a swoon.

"Forgive me, Kate! Oh, forgive me!" cried Clinton, forgetting in the agony of the moment that the blow he was meditating had not been struck, as he gathered the slight form of the prostrate woman in his arms, and covered her brow with burning kisses. Then, as she showed no sign of consciousness, he bore her to a sofa, and, kneeling beside her, pressed his lips to brow and cheek and hands, as he continued passionately to pronounce her name. But as she gave no indication of speedy revival, he was compelled to call assistance, and a scene of alarm and confusion ensued. With the coming of excited servants, however, Kate began to furnish proofs of restoration. Opening her eyes at last, and seeing Clinton beside her, she stretched forth her hand trustingly to him, and, with a faint smile, murmured the one word, "thanks!" Then

closing her eyes once more, and breathing heavily, she lay as if in a state of complete exhaustion.

It was, of course, no time for explanation, and Clinton was forced to leave with what he regarded as a serious misapprehension uncorrected.

For several days Kate was too ill to see him; but, as he called regularly to inquire after her health, she as regularly sent him tender messages, in all of which was conveyed the expression of her warmest gratitude for the great happiness he had conferred upon her.

During all this time Clinton was the most miserable being in the world. He found himself in a most trying dilemma. The measure he was asked to assist in advancing was utterly opposed to all his previous opinions; and besides, when he would set himself down to seriously consider the situation, the warning words against submission to Tammany, which Tom Sponge had pronounced, would provokingly intrude themselves upon his mind, and, with all his contempt for their author, he could not drive them out. But how, if he adhered to his previous resolution, was he to set himself right with Kate? How was he to undo the mischief he conceived himself to have already done? That Kate loved him devotedly he had no doubt, estimating her attachment by what he believed to be the strength of his own; and after what had transpired he feared the shock to her system, should he retract what he had unintentionally promised. Could he do so honorably, or with any just hope of retaining either her or his own

respect? The case, consequently, had two sides to it, and he began anxiously to balance the arguments pro and con, and so committed a fatal blunder. He was in no position to render an impartial decision. His inclination was a disturbing element whose force he could not properly calculate. His conscience was still as true as the needle to the pole, but the loadstone of his heart was a power he could not control nor properly measure. His habit of thought as an advocate, likewise, imperceptibly influenced his judgment. It led him to magnify one side of the case at the expense of the other. An attorney finds little difficulty in becoming enthusiastic on either side of a cause. He learns to see reasons alone in the interest of his retainer. Clinton was naturally clear-headed, and strove to be impartial; but when he took up the scheme which had before appeared so repugnant, and studied its favorable side with a lawyer's eye, he was at first surprised and afterwards delighted to discover how much might be said in its behalf. Gradually and unwittingly he became its advocate to his own mind. He did not surrender without a struggle; but one after another he found the objections that had stood in his way removed, and he was even enabled to suggest points of amendment calculated to make the measure more effective than at first proposed. Barton Seacrist, to whom Clinton's change of views was duly communicated, was delighted, and most heartily complimented Kate on her powers of persuasion and the cleverness of her convert. Then,

and not till then, was Kate sufficiently restored to health to again see her lover.

Only one other interview remains to be at present described.

No sooner had Clinton left the house on the occasion of Kate's sudden illness, than the recovery of that young lady was astonishingly rapid. She peremptorily ordered all the servants present to leave the room, and directed that her waiting-maid, Mademoiselle Cathron, should at once be sent to her apartment. When that important domestic made her appearance, her mistress was standing before a mirror, calmly studying her reflected figure.

"That wash of yours has made me look a perfect ghost," she quietly remarked, without turning away from the glass.

"Would Mees have some of the *vinaigre de rouge* to restore her color?"

"Oh, no! I am to remain indisposed for some time; but you may get me in order to play sick."

CHAPTER IV

THE PEOPLE'S ANTI-TAMMANY AND UNIVERSAL REFORM PARTY.

IN every free country—that is, where the people rule their so-called masters, whether endowed with the constitutional function of creating them or not—while there may be many factions, there can be but two political parties. These may be known by any names, and in point

of fact their nomenclature is likely to be affected by every important revolution in civil policy; but their true and constant classification is into Progressionists and Conservatives. By these titles we shall designate them.

With the peculiarities of the parties referred to we have nothing now to do, as not being in the line of our story, except as they serve to explain the position held by Tammany at the date of the period with which we are dealing. That Society, which dates back to the origin of the Government, started with the advance wave of the Progressionist flood-tide. It was then, both in motive and principle, thoroughly radical. Its predominant idea was the extension of popular government. Its divinity, typified by the free man of the forest, was the demi-god of Democracy. Being then poor, so far as the worldly condition of its members went, it was like a ship with ample canvas and but little freightage. To keep even with the foremost required on its part no effort whatever. But with the in-coming of political patronage and power, its specific gravity was so increased that, gradually losing in the race of popular ideas, and in time being entirely outstripped by the Progressionist flood, it settled and became stationary in the midst of a Conservative sediment—the inevitable effect of an over-load of emolument and power. There, a still staunch, but grounded, hulk, around which eddied the drifting currents of that political element which knows and seeks no real progress, it became, in

very much the same way that battered wrecks become the nuclei of broad and populous islands, to be the centre of a mass of accumulating debris—a great city's, as well as a great party's, accretion of waste and spoil—each deposit of which fixed it more and more immovably in its place. Instead of marking with its own progress the advance of liberal political beliefs, it was at last a break-water upon which the current struck only to be shattered and turned back. No longer the champion of the many against the encroachments of the few—for no form of government can wholly preclude that species of tyranny—it became the embodiment of the most un-Democratic centralization of power. A more cruel mockery of both individual and corporate freedom, under names and forms that had once been faithfully significant, and which were still specious, was not to be found.

At the period of time which the progress of our story has reached, Tammany had become a mere personal power. All of its own authority, and the control which under its direction was exercised over the affairs of the great city of New York, were lodged in the hands of a few men, the Society's sachems or foremost officials, of whom Barton Seacrist, as we have seen, was the real leader. The inspiration of all its movements, and through it of the most elaborate municipal machinery, came from one mind—or rather, from two minds acting in accord; for the reader knows what the public was ignorant of—of Kate Seacrist's agency in the schemes of which her

father was supposed to be sole originator. The power of Barton Seacrist, within the circle to which Tammany's operations extended, was almost supreme. He made and unmade, raised up and cast down, and there was no one among all those who sought to share in the emoluments of the municipality which his cunning directed, but professed to do him profoundest reverence. The reader has already seen, in the account of the dinner party gathering of his satellites given in the preceding Book, how profuse and servile was their adulation. And yet Barton Seacrist was not satisfied. There were certain points of authority for which his ambition thirsted, that were still beyond his grasp. If these were attained, he believed that he would be content; but until then his mind could not be at rest. With Kate's assistance he had contrived a measure which, if carried into operation, would realize all that his utmost aspiration meditated. It was so constructed that, under the pretence of meeting certain universally acknowledged wants, what little power remained in the hands of the public was to be ingeniously extracted to be given over to the Tammany Sachem and his immediate followers. As already shown, Clinton Mainland had been selected as the instrument to be used in carrying the scheme through the stages preliminary to its final execution.

But while Barton Seacrist and his daughter were busy with the steps antecedent to the inauguration of their plans, and particularly in overcoming the scruples of Clinton

Maintland as their principal agent in the work, they were menaced with a danger of whose existence they were totally unconscious. Whispers of their design, with a correct interpretation of its meaning, had got abroad, and certain public-spirited citizens had taken alarm. But, as they were chiefly Progressionists, who were in a hopeless minority, besides being constitutionally averse to energetic political action, their dissatisfaction would have amounted to little, had it not been reinforced by discontent among the Conservatives. There the trouble was more serious. Some had grown jealous of Seacrist's overreaching authority; some who had received favors at his hands were disappointed because they were not greater; some were out of humor because others had been equally sneered with themselves, and some—and by far the greater number—were ready to go into temporary opposition in the hope of being bought back with enlarged emoluments. Altogether, there was a considerable element ripe for revolt.

At last there was a meeting of conspirators. Four men who had previously addressed each other in whispers upon the street, assembled in solemn conclave. They met in a back room, behind a door that was carefully closed and locked, and spoke in voices that were low and almost tremulous. One was Scourge, of the *Sunday Plague*, who had taken mortal offence because he had received no more patronage than the *Daily Rocket*. Another was Senator Bloom, who, although holding one of the most lucrative positions in the city,

had asked for one still more lucrative, but which Seacrist had already promised to another supporter. The others were Browbeat and Striker, two active and useful, but not prominent Conservative leaders, who, having sought the same job from the great Tammany Sachem, and finding it given to a third party of greater political influence, had poured their mutual griefs into each other's ears.

At first the four men were exceedingly guarded in their expressions, each being suspicious of the others. But, after all had told the story of their wrongs, their courage and their confidence alike increased. A careful study of the political situation was entered upon, and the effect was almost magical. It was conclusively shown that all the Progressionists and all the Conservatives—except such as were "owned" by Tammany—added to such voters as the four conspirators could control, made up a clear majority of the entire voting population. It was then and there, accordingly, resolved that Tammany should be overthrown. Arranging, in the meanwhile, to see the leaders of the different parties and factions, which it was thought might be combined against the common enemy, they then adjourned to a future day.

On the following Lord's Day, the few hundred readers of the *Sunday Plague*, which had always before been little else than a chronicle of the virtues of Tammany and Seacrist, were astonished to find both of them attacked in the columns of that journal in language which furnished indubitable proof of Scourge's work-

manship. The one was declared to be a "den of thieves," and the other was assailed as "a despot and a robber," while both were threatened with some dreadful, but not very intelligible, disaster.

On Monday the four politicians again met. There was some disappointment because neither Abel Cummager, of the Mohicans, nor any of the other prominent political leaders who had been invited, put in an appearance. But their absence was in good measure compensated for by the presence of one who had several years before represented the Progressionists in a very exciting canvass, as an unsuccessful candidate for a leading office, and who did not hesitate to pledge their entire strength to the proposed movement. So energetic were his denunciations of Tammany, and so emphatic his assurances of support from the great party he professed to represent, that the utmost enthusiasm was excited by his words—a fact at which the reader will not be greatly surprised when he learns that the important personage was our old acquaintance, Tom Sponge. How he came to be present at this time and place, it is not necessary here to inquire. It is enough to know that he was there, and in an outfit which had rarely been surpassed in magnificence.

The five men thus assembled decided to organize a party and select a ticket with a view to the election then not far off—their sole purpose being the overthrow of Tammany as led by Barton Seacrist. The first important step, and one which for a

time threatened to be ruinous to the entire project, was the selection of a suitable name for their organization.

Scourge, who desired that there should be no misunderstanding as to their purpose, proposed "Anti-Tammany."

Senator Bloom, who thought the corruption of which their adversaries were known to be guilty, should be the chief point of attack, suggested "Reform."

Browbeat believed a more comprehensive title should be secured, and declared himself in favor of "The People's."

Striker, more enthusiastic than any of them, foreseeing how the new party was to swallow up all the others, wanted it called "The Universal."

For a time the disagreement on this important point seemed irreconcilable, each man stubbornly adhering to his own selection, and scouting all the others; when Sponge, just as the meeting seemed on the point of angry dissolution, came to the rescue of the movement by suggesting a course that reconciled all differences. He discovered great merit in each of the names proposed—so great, indeed, that he thought none of them should be lost. His proposition was that all should be combined. So reasonable, and at the same time so flattering, was the suggestion, that it was at once acceded to, and the name of "THE PEOPLE'S ANTI-TAMMANY AND UNIVERSAL REFORM PARTY" was adopted with great applause.

The next point was the selection

of suitable candidates for the various offices to be filled, to offer to the people for their support. This work progressed very satisfactorily, until it came to the choice of a leader on the legislative ticket. The importance of the selection for this place was manifest from the knowledge which had been obtained of Barton Seacrist's plans, and the necessity of finding some one who, as a law-maker, would be fully competent to penetrate and frustrate them. Several distinguished individuals were mentioned in that connection; but Tom Sponge presented the claims of one so strongly and enthusiastically that all others were at once yielded in his favor. Tom's man was Clinton Maintland.

The work for the time being concluded with the appointment of a committee, of which Seource, on account of his literary standing, was made the chairman, to prepare an address to the people, setting forth the danger to the public from Tammany's threatened encroachments, and calling a convention at one of the largest halls in the city, at a time fixed upon, to which all sympathizing with the movement should be invited without regard to former party lines, and at which it was proposed that the programme already resolved upon, should be proposed and adopted as if the spontaneous action of the assembled multitude; the wise precaution being employed of having the candidates to be nominated seen and their concurrence secured in advance. This much accomplished, the five conspirators who, altogether, had not the influ-

ence, the wealth, or position of a single first class citizen, heartily congratulated each other upon their success, and separated in the confident belief that they had inaugurated a movement which was destined, not only to sweep one of the oldest and strongest political institutions out of existence, but to lift themselves to the pinnacle of power and renown.

CHAPTER V.

THE PHOTOGRAPH.

BECAUSE Clinton Maintland had fully committed himself to Barton Seacrist's measure, and had learned to present its claims in their strongest possible bearings both to himself and to others, it did not follow that he was at all times wholly reconciled to its support. He had been educated in the firm belief of the people's right of self-government, and the only ambition he had ever indulged for a share in public affairs, was the dream—occasionally admitted—of sometime becoming its champion. To pledge himself to a scheme that was to abridge instead of to enlarge the popular prerogative, was in truth to turn from a rooted faith; and with all the special pleading his utmost ingenuity could suggest, he could not at times see it in any other light. He tried to reconcile his judgment to his interests, his conscience to his inclination; and to a considerable extent the effort was successful; but there were periods of misgiving and compunction when he was greatly moved to unsay all he

had promised, and return with renewed ardor to the principle of his first adoption, at every sacrifice.

For these qualms of political conscience, the young partisan found, when the power of self-persuasion failed him, but one efficient sedative, and to that he was accustomed to turn with the same impulsion that leads the inebriate to his cups. In his passion for Kate Seacrist, he found not merely compensation for the mental pangs and twitches to which he was exposed, but forgetfulness of their cause. The intoxication that flowed from the indulgence of her society—for her conversation had all the sparkle and the juicy ripeness of purest wine—and from the meditation of her imputed virtues in her bodily absence, was quite sufficient to reconcile him to his fate. He was, or supposed he was, desperately in love.

Nevertheless, he was not forgetful of his other and earlier mistress, his profession. His fame as a rising barrister continually increased, and cases of importance crowded upon his hands. It thus happened that the incident now about to be described was encountered.

Clinton had been retained to defend a man charged with the highest crime known to the law. The proof was very strong, and the case, to all appearances, desperate; but the advocate, entering upon his work with all the energy and resolution which his professional duty was supposed to call for, performed his part so well and successfully that his client, although convicted, was sentenced to a brief term of imprisonment only.

No one was better satisfied with the result than the convict himself, who, when the judgment of the court was pronounced, candidly admitted to his counsel that he was guilty of the highest grade of offence. Nevertheless, there was something about the man that deeply interested Clinton in his behalf—what, he could not tell, for he was manifestly a hardened wretch—but something so enticing, that he resolved to visit him in prison and obtain from him, if possible, the story of his life.

The name of the man, as he frankly informed Clinton, who seemed to have fully secured his confidence, notwithstanding he had been known by a dozen aliases, was Robert Hazen. He had been but a comparatively short time the outlaw he then appeared. Manhood had found him successfully entering upon an humble, but honest calling in the city of New York. Although his fortune was moderate, his future could scarcely have promised surer happiness. He was contented with his lot, and was about to be married to the woman of his heart—but, at this point of his narrative the speaker's eyes suddenly flashed with vicious light, and his voice grew husky in his throat. "Here, sir," he went on with a struggle, "begins my fall. I loved that girl with all the power my soul was capable of. I may have been blind, but I thought there was nobody so good, so true, and I put my whole life under her feet. There was no reserve on my part—no chance for retreat. Oh, sir, but I did worship her! I was not to blame, because I could not help myself. Well,

sir, as I was saying, we were to be married; the time was fixed; my friends had all congratulated me, and I had hunted out, oh, the sweetest little nest of a house!—a trifle above my means; but then there was nothing, I said to myself, too good for *her*.

"I ought to have told you, sir—but I forgot—that her father was a poor man. He had been unlucky in his undertakings, and was quite down. People did not speak very well of him—said he was a changeable, visionary man, and would never be of any account. But I cared nothing for that. I was rather glad of it, as I thought it would be a satisfaction to help him along.

"Well, sir, as I was saying, the day was fixed—and wasn't very far off either; and I was so happy, I scarcely cared for anything, when I heard a whisper—I had heard the same kind of talk before, and it had never amounted to anything—that my father-in-law-to-be was some way in luck—was to have some office, and would go up in the world."

"I thought nothing at all about it—there was only one thing I could think about—until the next time I went to the house, when I detected a slight reserve—a sort of hesitancy I couldn't exactly understand, but which somehow chilled me in spite of myself. Well, sir, the trouble grew as the fortunes of the family improved. The father got his office, and they moved to a better house on a gayer street, and the daughter had less and less time to give to her lover's society. The time for the wedding came and went—for it was

put off on some pretext—and still I never distrusted. Oh, sir, I was blind—love-blind. But why prolong the story? I was finally discarded—told—not by her, but by the father—that my visits were no longer desired, and that, if I wanted a wife, I must seek one elsewhere."

"I was deranged—confounded. I did not know what I did. I had always been a sober man; but I went and drank and drank until I was worse than crazy, and in my delirium I came very near committing a dreadful crime—one that would have sent me to the gallows. But I escaped then; and, when my reason came back, I sought that woman and told her everything. I made her see and hear me, although they tried to keep me out of the house. I told her that I was a lost man if things went on as they were—that I was going down, body and soul, and that she alone had power to save me—that the responsibility would be solely hers. I appealed to her in the name of that love she had over and over professed for me.

"She told me that her heart had undergone no change, but that her position had; that she would still gladly marry me, if circumstances would permit; and of those circumstances her father was to be the judge. I saw her father, told him everything, and appealed to him in behalf of the happiness of both myself and his daughter. He heard me patiently, pretended to pity me, and offered me money as compensation for my wrongs. I cursed him to his face. I tried to see the daugh-

ter once more, but I was refused admission to the house. I met her upon the street—I waited and watched until she went out—but when I spoke to her, she turned her head aside and passed on. Now, sir, what would you have done under such circumstances?"

"Torn the image of that perfidious creature from my heart, and lived to scorn my love as I would scorn her who had inspired it!" was Clinton's passionate reply; but his voice, nevertheless, trembled just a little towards the close; for the thought of Kate Seacrist, and of his love, entered his mind, and he could not help asking himself what he should do were he to be made the victim of such infidelity.

"Oh, sir, but you did not know my girl!" urged the poor, sentenced wretch in response. "You could never have done that if you had loved her. She was no ordinary person; she had such eyes—such a voice—such a way with her, there was no resisting her power. She was not beautiful, but there was something about her that no other woman I ever met seemed to possess. I have her photograph here—here in my bosom, where I have kept it ever since she promised to be mine. I want you to look at it, and then say if you can wonder at my folly." And with that the man took out a small photograph case, plain and much worn, and, opening it, held it up before his auditor's eyes.

Clinton started back as if a mine had exploded beneath him. His eyes fairly glared as they gazed upon the face of Kate Seacrist.

There was no mistaking that likeness. Every feature was presented—her very smile was there.

His consternation, however, was but momentary. He recovered himself almost on the instant. The thought that some trick was being practiced came to his help, and with it a feeling of intense indignation.

"It's false—false, sir!" he exclaimed, without considering whom he was addressing. "Your whole story is a lie. You never knew Kate—that woman. Repeat that libel again and I'll drive the falsehood down your throat."

"It's a lie, is it?" said the man, with taunting coolness. "You don't believe that I ever loved Kate Seacrist—you see I know the name in full—and that she ever loved me. I'm only a poor jail-bird, I know, and my word doesn't go very far; but I've got other evidence—I've got other evidence." And with those words Hazen began to fumble about his clothes, and finally succeeded in displaying a small package of papers which, it was easy to see, consisted of old letters.

"Pass your eye over them," he added in the same deliberate tone, holding out the parcel to Clinton, "and see whether it's a lie or not."

There was no mistake about it. Clinton recognized the handwriting at a glance. Not only that, but, as he read line after line, he found many of the very same loving expressions Kate had over and over addressed to him, and which he had treasured away in his heart as the sweetest souvenirs of his courtship, here first addressed to an-

other—and that other the poor, convicted and blood-stained felon before him.

With a groan Clinton tossed the papers back to their owner and hid his face in his hands, while the great stone building in which they were, seemed to be whirling round and round.

"Oh, I see how it is?" said Hazen, with a touch of tenderness in his voice. "You have met Kate Searcist, and are a victim too. I don't wonder at it—I don't wonder at it. She's a witch. There's no reason why you should not be ensnared as well as I. But, oh, sir, if you're not too far gone already, save yourself in time. Act on your own words. Tear the image of the perfidious creature from your breast. One ruin's enough for her to make. As for me, it's too late. I'm lost. But as for you, you're firm yet, and a great deal stronger than I ever was. Oh, I hope you'll escape; but I do pity you—on my soul, I pity you!"

These words restored Clinton. The pity of the poor wretch he had saved from the gallows cut him. Pride came to the rescue. Composing himself as best he could, he bade the man goodbye, and went out from the prison's walls, but with a heart heavier than any man's within them.

Rapidly he walked away—where, he neither knew nor cared. His brain was in a whirl. He could think of nothing connectedly—rationally. Suddenly, however, he was brought back to a realizing sense of his surroundings by an incident of a somewhat startling character.

He was hurrying along a narrow street as a wagon in charge of a drunken or reckless driver came dashing by. An old woman, quite feeble and humbly clad, just then was tottering across the way, and the wheel, striking her a fearful blow, dashed her almost at Clinton's feet, while the heartless whip, turning and seeing what he had done, lashed his horse and was soon out of sight.

A noisy crowd speedily gathered round, but Clinton's whole attention was directed to the injured woman, whom he had taken in his arms and carried from the roadway, and who was profusely bleeding from a fearful wound in the face. He did not notice that a stylish carriage had stopped near by, and a fashionably-dressed lady, discovering the cause of the commotion, had descended, and was engaged in staunching the blood with her lace-bordered handkerchief.

"Will not some one get a conveyance to take the woman to the hospital?—the case is urgent," inquired Clinton, speaking to the crowd, but without looking up.

"My carriage is at hand," replied the lady, in an exceedingly pleasant voice, but not lifting her eyes from her work. "It can proceed there at once."

Clinton's response was to lift the unfortunate woman in his arms, and carefully lay her upon one of the carriage's easy seats. Then, turning to the mistress of the equipage, he assisted her to enter, but without seeing her face, which was momentarily hidden by some drapery about

her hat. Having spoken a word of direction to the driver, he, however, turned to bow at parting, raised his hat, and met the eyes of Margaret Kortright. Both started at the unexpected recognition, but neither spoke. Clinton bent profoundly; Margaret gave him a glance which was certainly not of displeasure, and the carriage rolled away.

The incident^t just described completely sobered Clinton. So effectually did it restore his reflective faculties that by the time he had reached his office, to which he slowly bent his steps, his mind had gone over the whole field. He now saw the scheme to which he had suffered himself to become committed in the interest of Barton Seacrist, in all the enormity with which his unbiased judgment and education had prepared him to view it; and the woman he had expected to make his wife appeared to his newly-opened eyes as simply a fascinating, but heartless decoy, that had come near leading him to a fatal abandonment of long cherished principles. He could not at once erase her image from his heart, but the face of Margaret Kortright—that face that he had just looked upon, and which came so unexpectedly, and, as it almost seemed to him, providentially into the picture he was meditating, promised to make the operation much less painful than he had supposed could be possible. He was almost persuaded that he had never really loved Kate—that he had simply been bewitched by a cunning enchantress. That the charm was broken—so fatally broken that it could never

more be renewed—he felt assured; and he was prepared to rejoice in his deliverance, although stunned and staggered by the blow which had brought it.

While the first impression of his newly-acquired freedom was strong upon him, Clinton resolved to complete the work by emancipation. He accordingly indited two notes, one to Barton Seacrist, the other to Kate. Both were brief, entering into no lengthy explanation of the cause, but indicating such a radical change in his sentiments as involved the severing of all existing ties and obligations. Without pause or delay he took steps to have them forwarded to their destination. That done, he sat buried in meditation, feeling much as the shipwrecked man must do as he sits sore and weary upon the solid shore—safe at last—and looks back upon the raging sea from which he has just escaped.

But his reflections were speedily brought to an end. The door opened and in walked, ushered by Tom Sponge with much ceremony, the committee appointed by the meeting that had organized the People's Anti-Tammany and Universal Reform Party, to confer with the gentlemen selected to be its candidates at the next election. With great force and precision the chairman, who was Scourge, of the *Sunday Plague*, having thrown himself into an oratorical attitude, proceeded to state what he denominated the case of the people against their oppressors, laying particular stress upon the very measure which Clinton had been selected, and had consented, to carry

through, as a meditated outrage upon popular rights, of so gross a character as imperatively to call upon all good men at once to combine against Tammany as their common enemy. Clinton's consent, not only to join them in their patriotic movement, of the success of which the speaker declared there could be no doubt, but to serve as a candidate, was solicited. "In this great work, sir," said Seource with much impressiveness, in conclusion, "you have been chosen by the voice of your fellow-citizens for a position of distinguished honor and responsibility. Will you accept the trust?"

Clinton did not stop to inquire upon whose authority he had been chosen, or how respectable or formidable was the movement to which he had been invited to commit himself.

"I will," was his immediate and decisive reply.

When Tom Sponge with equal ceremoniousness had bowed the committee out of the room, he turned with a countenance radiant with satisfaction and said to Clinton :

"What do you think of my case against Tammany now?"

CHAPTER VI.

TEST AND COUNTER-TEST.

CLINTON MAINTLAND made one mistake. He was in error when he supposed that Kate Seacrist did not love him. She had given him her heart with a devotion as intense as she was capable of, and her nature was strong and earnest. True, her

affection was not purely unalloyed—not strictly disinterested; for other forces were actively at work in her bosom. Nevertheless she was a woman, with a woman's soul, which an intellect strong and far-reaching, and a life full of busy ambition, had disciplined rather than subdued. Her heart had not lost its elasticity because her brain had become the theatre of stirring energies. One sex is not necessarily double-sided more than the other. Kate was capable of pursuing two cherished objects at the same time. She was fond of the excitement and intrigue to which her daily associations introduced her; but, for that reason, none the less longed for communion with a pure and manly spirit such as she believed Clinton's to be—nay, the desire for such companionship, as a change, as a relief, grew as thirst is increased by the absence of that which allays it.

She was not one to give up a purpose on which her soul was set without a struggle exhausting every resource of woman's ingenuity. Clinton erred when he congratulated himself in the belief that the battle was over, either with his own heart, or with Kate Seacrist. The sharpest trial was yet to be.

Knowing nothing of the meeting between her suitors, past and present, Kate, upon receiving Clinton's renunciation of the engagement, very naturally adopted an explanation far from the correct one. She perfectly knew that he was in principle averse to some of her father's schemes, and presumed that his conscience had simply revolted against

the political committal he had made, carrying his heart temporarily with it. She resolved to win back his allegiance to herself, and, if possible, to her father's interest.

Clinton was busy with some professional employment in his office when a female closely veiled—as females visiting lawyer's offices usually are—entered. If observed by him at all, the circumstance excited no interest; but Tom Sponge at once arose, and, after seeing the lady seated with much ceremony, desired to know her pleasure. She desired to confer with Mr. Maintland—and alone. Quite crest-fallen, Tom shrank back, and Clinton, arising, courteously requested the visitor to walk into his private office. There, having handed her a chair, with an unconcern amounting almost to indifference—she was doubtless some client in need of his professional assistance—he seated himself before her to await her communication. A moment passed without anything being said, when, raising her hand and suddenly sweeping her veil aside, Kate Seacrist looked in his face.

It is hardly necessary to say that Clinton was surprised—even startled; but he could not help noticing how pale his companion was. Mademoiselle Cathron had not done her work in vain.

Neither immediately spoke. At last Kate, seeing that she would have to take the initiative—for Clinton, the first shock over, sat calm, and even stern—began:

“Clinton—I mean Mr. Maintland—you have done me injustice.”

The speaker understood the per-

son she was dealing with well enough to be aware that, if she succeeded in convincing him that he had done her any wrong, even in thought, she had gained the shortest avenue to his sympathies, and to a considerable extent disarmed him in advance of opposition to her contemplated attack. Her voice trembled just a little as she pronounced the word “injustice.”

The only answer was a look of inquiry.

“Injustice,” she went on, after noting the effect of her opening, “in misjudging my motives towards yourself.”

“But, Miss Seacrist——”

“Injustice,” she repeated, without seeming to notice his interruption, “in supposing that I was led by unworthy——”

“Oh, no, Miss Seacrist, not——”

“Unworthy motives,” she resolutely persisted, “in consenting to become your wife. You suppose—say”—here her eyes rested for a moment on a piece of paper she held nervously in her hand, and which closely resembled the note Clinton had last written her—“that our engagement involved your support of certain measures—projects—I know not what you call them—of my father's. Oh, Clinton, how could you be so cruel—so—so—so——”

Here the speaker's voice completely failed her, and her eyes, full of tears, looked appealingly into her companion's.

“But, Miss Seacrist, was it not so?”

Clinton's words were strangely firm for such a crisis.

"Never!—on my part, never!" she answered quickly. "I will not—cannot—speak for my father. He is a politician—ambitious—calculating—as all politicians are. But, Clinton Maintland, speaking for myself, I again say—never!"

Here there was a pause, but no response.

"To prove to you how sincere I am, and how great is the wrong you have done me—are doing me," Kate continued, "I say to you here and now—I know you will despise me for the confession, but I can't help it—that I would—not will, for that is past—become your wife with no reference to my father's views."

The point was reached where the speaker clearly had calculated upon a crowning effect—something that would be decisive of the struggle. She had now put forth her master stroke. The result was very far from what she had expected. Clinton sat coolly tearing into little bits a piece of paper in his hand. A frown—it was but for a moment—swept over her countenance as she noted how totally unmoved he was, and then with a look of distress that could not have been feigned, Kate broke into words of protestation that manifestly came from the heart.

"Oh, Clinton, you surely, surely never loved me! You deceived me when you said you did. You could not have changed so quickly—so entirely. I have not changed—I cannot change; for, Clinton, with my whole soul I have loved you—I do love you!"

"So you told Robert Hazen."

The shaft was terribly effective.

Kate, who had been leaning earnestly forward, fell back in her chair as if she had been struck a stunning blow. Her breathing almost stopped, and, apparently, without considering what she was saying, she asked:

"Do you—do you know Robert Hazen?"

"Yes, Miss Seacrist, I know Robert Hazen."

Clinton spoke in a firm, measured tone.

"He is now a prisoner in the Tombs—the tenant of a convict's cell—a condemned, ruined man—and all because of his love for you—or rather, because of your professed love for him. He has told me all—his whole sad story. He has shown me your photograph—your letters to him, in which you protest an affection as constant as you have this minute avowed for me. He has been sacrificed, utterly sacrificed by your heartlessness—and yet that man, condemned by the law of the land—lost to all hope—has a soul that loves you still—even as you sit here asserting attachment to me."

Mademoiselle Cathron's preparations were no longer needed to give pallor to Kate's features as she sat listening to that terrible arraignment. At last she bent forward and covered her face with her hands. Her prostration seemed complete; but even then her thoughts were not so much on Robert Hazen, as on the course she should pursue in that fearful trial. She did not despair—not even then—of final victory. She thought she saw in the very depths of her humiliation a path to Clinton Maintland's heart.

At length, raising her head with an apparent effort at composure, she looked straight into the eyes of her accuser.

"Clinton Maintland," she said, "I acknowledge my sin. I did love Robert Hazen, even as I have loved—do love—you. I was false—basely false to him and to my own soul. I suffered my father's command to prevail against my heart. I was young—but a child—but oh, I ought to have married Robert Hazen! I ought to have defied my father's will—even as I have disregarded it this day. I have no defence to make. I have sinned and I have been punished—oh, how I am punished now! Farewell, Clinton Maintland! All is at an end between us. May—may—may God bless you!"

She had arisen while she was yet speaking, and started towards the door. She took a step or two—then stopped as if unable to proceed, tottered, and would have fallen prostrate, had Clinton Maintland not caught her in his arms.

Clinton had been firm—very firm; but he was not made of iron. He had been cold—very cold; but he was not made of ice. Heart and brain had both been busy while he had been listening to Kate's confession of her guilt—so different from the defence he had expected to hear from her lips. She was young when she had erred, and was nothing to be conceded to immaturity? he asked himself. Her father had commanded, and she had yielded against her own inclination—was not a daughter's love to be considered? She had been weak, but was weakness

never to be forgiven—in a woman? These were points he felt that he could urge with convincing power to a jury—was he to remain insensible to their force? Had he not been severe—harsh—perhaps unjust, as she had claimed, to her whom he had loved, and—he could no longer deny the fact—whom he loved still? These thoughts flashed through his brain like intuitions, and they completely changed the current of his sympathies. A reaction had set in, and he had risen to stay her departure, that he might ask her forgiveness for his suspicions and his cruelty, when she had tottered and fallen into his embrace. And then, with that helpless fainting girl, who had just given him such convincing proof of her devotion, once more in his arms—upon his bosom—her cold, colorless face turned unconsciously, but oh, how appealingly towards him, is it any wonder that the temporary barrier erected by his distrust should have given way, and the full tide of his strong, impetuous passion flowed back upon his soul? Resistlessly he pressed her to him, and kiss after kiss was lavished upon her passive lips. He must ask her forgiveness. He must down upon his knees and tell her he had sinned against her love, and plead his penitence. Nay, more; he must make atonement for his great transgression by yielding her more than she had asked. He would surrender his political compunctions. He would support her father's schemes to the utmost of his ability—for her sake. The sacrifice, he felt, under the circumstances, to be none too great to make. He

would gladly do even more, were it in his power; but this much he could and would do. All this he must tell her there, and without a moment's unnecessary delay. The words were upon his lips, and he only awaited her return to consciousness to make his full confession.

His resolution was fully made, and, had Kate been in a condition to have listened to his avowals, or dared to seem to be in that condition, an unequivocal committal would then and there have been poured into her ears. But time was given him for further meditation. Not that his purpose wavered in the least, but his mind had opportunity to canvass the ground upon which he had decided, and to proceed one step further. Kate had demonstrated her love by an act of singular abnegation, in thus coming to him and pledging her troth in disregard of her ambitious father's wish and will. That was a great deal, and all he had a right to ask—more than he had a right to expect—but there was one other test that might be applied. It was unnecessary he felt—wholly useless—but then it would make Love's victory more complete. He would make the trial.

Kate speedily recovered under such attentions as she received at the hands of her lover. She had been borne to a sofa, and lay with her head supported upon Clinton's arm. Languid, and weak, and dizzy she yet seemed to be; but she made an effort—unsuccessful, it is true—to rise.

"Stop—one minute—Miss Sea-

crist!" said Clinton with an assumed sternness of voice and manner which was entirely at war with his feelings.

Kate silently obeyed.

"You have told me, Miss Seacrist," Clinton proceeded in the same decided tone, "that our union need not depend, so far as you are concerned, upon my support of your father's views, which you rightly infer to be objectionable to me. Your generosity is fully appreciated; but there is one thing more you must know. So reprehensible, upon mature reflection, did your father's purposes appear, that I conceived it to be my duty as a citizen to put myself in a position actively to oppose them. I have, in fact, accepted a candidacy on a platform of express opposition to them. My word—my pledge has been given."

"Then," said Kate, suddenly springing to her feet, with flashing eyes and the disappearance of every sign of weakness, "my business here is ended. Nothing more remains to be said. Instead of union between us, there is to be conflict. Whoever is my father's enemy is my enemy. There can be no love for me that shall be hate of him and his. Clinton Maintland, I have humbled myself before you—put my heart at your feet—almost earned your contempt; but when we meet again, it will be under different—widely different circumstances."

No longer with uncertain step she moved; but, having hissed out her last words in Clinton's face, and leaving him too much astonished to reply, or in any way interfere, Kate swept from the room. Having

reached her home, for once she curtly refused Mademoiselle Cathron's proffered offices, although that zealous assistant protested to her mistress that she positively looked like a fright.

CHAPTER VII.

THE NEW DEPARTURE.

IN the spring, when floods are upon the earth, it requires very little force to start a torrent that will carry desolation in any direction. A child may mark out a channel with his finger, along which the subtle water will follow like a gentle play-fellow; but if it continues to flow on unchecked, it becomes a deep and roaring flood. It is so in the affairs of men, and particularly so in populous communities in everything relating to their political interests. "Unstable as water," is the judgment which ill-disposed critics have ever inclined to pronounce upon Democratic peoples. Unsympathetic and torpid in seasons of public stagnation, they become scarcely controllable when the spring-tide of general agitation for any cause has swelled their passions to the full. Their emotions being the guides usually followed in all things appertaining to the popular cause, they go out for a time with almost irresistible power and singular unanimity when the most insignificant agency may be all that gives direction to their movement.

Nothing ordinarily could have appeared more ridiculous than for five such men as Scourge, of the *Sunday*

Plague, Senator Bloom, Browbeat, and Striker, who were merely disappointed, and consequently "sore-headed," politicians, and our bankrupt and vagabond acquaintance, Tom Sponge, to undertake the inauguration of a popular movement against the Tammany Society—a political power as old as the Government, and under the leadership of a man as capable as Barton Seacrist; and under ordinary circumstances nothing would have been so futile. But now, as explained in a previous chapter, the public mind had grown jealous of a domination which seemed content with nothing short of absolute power, and many were ready to follow any standard of revolt that might be raised against it and its head. The attempt, therefore, was not so preposterous after all.

At first, as might be supposed, the movement met with little positive encouragement; but it enlisted attention, and that was a great deal. Scourge's paper, which contained his opening attack on Tammany and Seacrist, was eagerly sought after, and enough extra copies of it were sold to throw the little man into a state of almost uncontrollable ecstasy, and inspire him to greatly increased bitterness of assault. People, too, began to talk; not behind their doors merely, but upon the street; and those who knew nothing—and that included nearly all—shook their heads a great deal more solemnly than if they knew everything. And then the five conspirators had never before been so busy in all their lives. Each had his acquaintances to whom he admitted

that he was in the movement, and talked largely, but mysteriously, about his influential companions; and in that way each one became the centre of a circle of ripples that went chasing all over the surface. The newspapers, too, which invariably get an inkling of everything that is going on, found out just enough of the meditated movement to set their inventive faculties fairly to work, and the most enlarged reports were, consequently, put in circulation. The secret meeting of five was speedily swelled to a formidable gathering of five hundred at least.

The result of all this was that, by the time appointed for the meeting that was to introduce the People's Anti-Tammany and Universal Reform Party and its purposes to the public, general curiosity had been thoroughly aroused. An immense concourse of people assembled at the designated place. One of the largest halls in the city was filled. It was a motley crowd. A majority of those present had come merely to find out what it all meant, and, being neither hostile nor friendly, were ready to applaud or denounce according to the course of events. A small number were there manifestly to embarrass the proceedings as much as possible; but a larger force, on the other hand, was clearly intent upon giving all the encouragement in its power. This last element consisted of members of the Mohican Society, and, although its leader, Abel Cummager, was not to be seen, their presence showed that the movement had his powerful, although secret, influence.

The chairman was Senator Bloom, who was escorted upon the stage by Scourge, of the *Sunday Plague*. The appearance of the two men was the signal for some impertinence from the supporters of Tammany, but a roar of applause from the lusty throats of the Mohicans, completely drowned the opposition. Taking advantage of the calm that followed the storm, the Senator thanked the audience for the warmth of their reception, and succeeded in very satisfactorily getting through with the organization. Browbeat was the first speaker. He was met at the outset by some interruptions of a provoking nature, but, being a man who liked nothing so well as opposition, he rose with the occasion, and, with the help of the Mohicans, got through triumphantly. Striker, who followed, was not so fortunate. He was an excitable man, easily losing his temper, and, becoming irritated by some taunting remarks from the crowd, began to scold back, and the result was a scene of indescribable confusion. The speaker's enemies howled in disapprobation, while his supporters were still more clamorous with their cheers and calls of encouragement, making between them a perfect bedlam, the orator meanwhile dancing frantically up and down the stage, his arms fiercely beating the air, and his face livid with excitement and the desperation of his efforts to make his voice heard above the uproar in which it was completely drowned. The meeting was on the point of breaking up in a general row and riot, when some of the speaker's friends, getting him by

the coat-tails, dragged him into a seat.

In the midst of the humming and buzzing noises that followed the great outbreak, a young man was brought before the audience, who, although a stranger to the majority of those present, at once commanded attention by his tall, shapely form, his pleasant, earnest face, and his quiet dignity of manner. Silence immediately ensued. "Fellow-citizens," said the speaker in a voice perfectly calm and natural, but which reached to the most distant portion of the great chamber. Instantly a tall, gaunt man, with a flaming neck-tie, sprang up and began clapping his hands together. The demonstration spread, and what was clearly an impulsive, but hearty welcome to the youthful orator, swept round the assembly. The tall man was Tom Sponge, and the explanation of his enthusiasm was the fact that the speaker was Clinton Maintland.

Clinton bowed his acknowledgment of the compliment, and then proceeded with his remarks. It was soon apparent to all that he was thoroughly master of the subject he was discussing. Some interruptions were attempted, but the general interest of the audience instantly suppressed them and they were discontinued. There was no straining for effect, no attempt at oratorical display, and no denunciation of anybody indulged by the speaker. He gave simply a calm and logical presentation of the principles and facts involved in the questions that were foremost at the time. Having gone fully and fairly over the grounds

that were embraced in the movement he advocated, he modestly took his seat. There was a moment's quiet, and then the tall man with the flaming neck-tie was once more on his feet, frantically cheering and clapping his hands. The contagion of his example spread. The applause became more general, and pretty soon the whole assembly was demonstrating as with one accord. As the noise began to subside, it was once more renewed, the man with the red neck-tie still leading, and this was again and again repeated. The meeting was a success. Clinton had carried the great audience, which was fairly representative of the whole community, with him ; its judgment had been convinced, and the People's Anti-Tammany and Universal Reform Party was from that moment launched with flying colors.

Before the excitement produced by Clinton Maintland's successful debut as a political orator had died away, a tall, spare man was seen making his way with some difficulty through the audience, and having at last reached the platform, ascended it, and came face to face with the people. "Windsham!" cried a voice in the crowd, and the name was instantly taken up and shouted all over the room. The new-comer was indeed, no other than Windsham, the distinguished politician and orator, who was introduced to the reader in the earlier pages of this work. He had been occupying an obscure point in the hall from the commencement of the proceedings, as much as possible avoiding observation ; but no sooner was the meet-

ing's success demonstrated than he pushed forward with the result just stated. Bowing again and again in response to the calls that were made upon him, he stepped to the front of the platform and delivered a speech in which he fully pledged himself to the movement that night publicly inaugurated. There was, indeed, very little in his address, although no man knew better how for the time to flatter and entertain a promiscuous audience; yet his previous well-known connection with Tammany and Seacrist made his accession at that time appear most important, and added greatly to the interest and eclat of the occasion.

The effect of such a commencement was even greater than the authors of the movement had hoped for. The meeting just described was the sensation of the time. Hundreds of substantial citizens hastened to give in their adhesion, and as for the professional politicians who crowded to pledge their support to the new party, there seemed to be no end to them. Its projectors had, indeed, struck the public in the spring tide of its fullness, and had set in motion a current, which, with proper direction, could not possibly fail to bear them on to victory.

CHAPTER VIII.

BEFORE THE BATTLE.

THE most important—and the least important—event in American affairs is a popular election; the most important before—the least im-

portant after—it is over. With the counting of the ballots usually dies the interest of a contest which has for a time set whole communities fiercely by the ears.

The privilege of choosing our own rulers is, unquestionably, a most precious one—to the majority. But what must be said for the minority which, after wasting its energies in the arduous struggles of a long campaign, finds itself in the end doomed to the rule of the very men it has proved to its own satisfaction to be the worst in the community? Of what value to it is the boon of self-government? Its will, instead of being carried into execution, is set at express defiance.

If we could only meet as friends and brethren, persuaded that the greatest number necessarily possessed the largest supply of political wisdom, and content that its voice should prevail, how happy we would be! And why not? Is not such the theory and the spirit upon which our whole system is predicated? Alas, we have political parties!

The machinery of party organization is the plague of a free people. It is the rack upon which the body politic is periodically stretched until bone is rent from bone, and the whole country is made sick and sore. The process of choosing those who ought to be our public servants, by the simple agency of the ballot, would seem to be a very harmless operation; and such, doubtless, it would prove, were there no partisan demagogues to lash us into a fury, and make us quarrel with each other whether we want to or not.

But, the election over, the excitement is over. All then are reconciled—the majority because they have prevailed, the minority because they can't help themselves. But is all danger over? Are there no heart-burnings, no rankling discontents, no severed friendships, no slumbering animosities—the seed of party planting—that remain to take fresh root and grow to harvests of angry strife? Is not the quietude that succeeds to the noisy political contest too often like the calm that follows the battle—a peace that is purchased with bleeding wounds and broken hearts?

In exposing the folly and crime to which parties and partisans lead, and teaching the duty of forbearance and moderation in the hour of the citizen's severest trial, who will deny to fiction the power of doing something? Clearly it would be as unwise to reject its offices here, as it would be unpatriotic to withhold them. The supreme lesson which we, as a people, need to learn—and no source of instruction is too unimportant to be overlooked—is the subordination to the common weal of those private and selfish preferences which it is the labor of party to excite—lest we, who boast so much of our privileges, may yet have reason to envy the Russian or the Turk the enjoyment of that stoical content which leads him to praise Heaven for the mercy of a despotism.

No one more clearly realized the danger to which he was exposed by the events recorded in the immediately preceding chapters, than Barton Seacrist. He had quite suffi-

cient political experience and sagacity to estimate their forces, and to calculate to the fullest extent their probable bearings. He knew that if all the elements of opposition to his authority could be drawn into the new party movement, and made to work harmoniously together, as might, with prudent leadership, easily be done, a force would be created greater than he could possibly command. He knew, too, that defeat at this crisis would be utterly destructive of all his long-cherished schemes for personal and party advancement, while the investigations to which it would expose some of his past transactions, threatened ruin alike to reputation and estate. The defections from his interest, in many instances of men who owed everything to his patronage, were numerous and disheartening; but none of them did he contemplate with as much pain and alarm as the abandonment of his cause by Clinton Maintland, to whom he had looked as the chiefest instrument to carry his views into effect. Now Clinton, if elected to office, was likely to be as damaging as an adversary, as he had before promised to be valuable as an ally. Unless, in some way, the combination that was being formed against the great Sachem could be shattered between that time and the election—only a few weeks off—and especially Clinton Maintland's defeat be secured, all was lost. The prospect was, indeed, alarming. Yet no man appeared more easy and hopeful than Barton Seacrist. The same placid smile was on his brow, and he greeted his political friends

with an ease and confidence that went very far to remove their fears on his and their account. Amid all the tumult and excitement of the hour, he was the most self-possessed man in New York.

But, in his case, serenity did not betoken indifference. He was at the same time the most busy man in New York. Yet no one knew either what he was doing or intended to do. His reticence confused, and, to a certain extent, discouraged his enemies; and therein was secured the first advantage.

His social duties were not neglected. Another dinner-party was given, to which were collected his still faithful friends and followers. Alderman Skipp was there; Grulls, the liquor merchant, was there; the men of padding were there, for nowhere else could they get such dinners, and dinners to them were earth's highest felicities; Cinnamon Smooth was there, as smiling and amiable as ever; and Abel Cummager was there, his dark brow brooding like a shadow at the feast, and evidently regarded by all except the host as a storm-cloud might have been, but himself perfectly cool and self-possessed. And lastly, of those who need here be mentioned, was Scratchal, of the *Daily Rocket*; for it was intended that the public should know that Barton Seacrist and his friends were, as usual, meeting and making merry.

Whether it was owing to the absence of Windsham, who had always before taken the lead at such entertainments, but who on this occasion was edifying a People's Anti-Tam-

many and Universal Reform meeting in another part of the city; or to the uncertain character of the political outlook, there was depression to be read upon every brow except those of the host and his daughter. Barton Seacrist was as vivacious and buoyant as ever, and Kate was even more than ordinarily brilliant. True, her eyes had a restless, hungry look, and her laugh, although loud and frequent, had a certain strained and fitful shrillness, which suggested effort rather than natural gayety. Her cheeks had grown perceptibly more hollow; but, thanks to Mademoiselle Cathron's skill, they had never worn such glossy freshness before; while her wit was so sharp and sparkling, that even Abel Cummager, who, as usual, was seated by her side, was more than once compelled to give way to a smile.

The table party soon broke up. Cummager was allured by Kate into the music-room, and there so well and faithfully entertained, that he found it impossible to bestow any attention elsewhere; Cinnamon Smooth and one of the men of "padding" became uncommonly intimate in a distant corner, while Scratchal, having obtained all that seemed essential for the next day's *Rocket*, took his departure at an early hour. Those who collected about the host of the evening, making a group of which he was the central figure, were without exception his tried and trusted political followers. The subject that engaged their attention was the pending canvass. With no seeming effort Seacrist managed to draw from each of the others an

opinion concerning the course to be pursued, without, however, giving expression to his own. Alderman Skipp, considering the contest as hopeless, was in favor of avoiding defeat by calling off all bets and withdrawing the stakes; Grulls submitted a plan for securing all the liquor places of the city, dispensing free drink for three days before the time for voting, and then carrying the election before the people could know what they were doing; while Hargate, who was more than ordinarily confident in the absence of Clinton Maintland, boldly advocated an organization with a view to taking forcible possession of the polls, and so placing the result beyond doubt, the material for which, he insisted, was ample and ready for action. The others present urged schemes quite as conflicting, and, generally, no more practicable.

Barton Seacrist heard all patiently, bestowed a word of compliment on each one's suggestion, and then quietly proceeded to unfold his own plan of operations. A very few words sufficed to make the matter plain.

"There, gentlemen," said he, in conclusion, "you have my views. The day need not be given up as lost; but to carry it will require your full and cordial co-operation. I need not ask if I may rely upon your assistance."

The response was all that he could have desired.

When that little gathering dissolved for the night, each member of it not only felt perfect confidence in the success of the common cause,

but knew precisely what he was to do to help bring it about.

That night, when all the guests were gone, and her faithful attendant, Mademoiselle Cathron, had been dismissed, Kate Seacrist was alone in her chamber. The air was balmy, and through an open window entered the softened, but, therefore, more bewitching, sounds of music and of dancing. They came from the residence of the Barnabas' across the avenue. There was a grand party there that night; but Kate was not one of those whose presence had been sought. It was not that the relations of the families had been at all unfriendly. From the time that the maternal Barnabas had so unexpectedly encountered "dear Mrs. Goaring" in the Seacrist mansion, down to within a very few days of the date now reached by this story, Adelia Barnabas had persistently addressed Kate as her "dear sister;" the mother had lost none of her gushing demonstrativeness; and Rushmore, the spendthrift son of the Goaring household, having grown weary of his humble love, had turned his eyes most patronizingly upon her; but now all was changed. The fortunes of the Seacrists were seriously imperilled; and not merely stories of impending political ruin to their house, but whispers of the arrest and punishment of its head for certain alleged malfeasances, began to fill the air.

Weary and faint with the labor and strain of the night—for all her gayety had been assumed—Kate had seated herself at the open window, and was gazing sadly at the silent,

starry heavens, when the sounds of the ball-room reached her ears. Having listened a moment, a look of dreadful bitterness settled upon her face.

"And is it for this," at last she said aloud, "and for the selfish flatteries of such as these, that I would give up the love of one who is as much above them as yonder stars are above the earth! Oh, God above, what am I doing?"

Then, as if to shut out the hateful sounds, she arose, hurried across the room, and, throwing herself upon her couch, buried her face in the pillow. When sleep at last overcame her, the pillow beneath her face was wet with her tears.

As for Clinton Maintland, he was now dearly paying for his newly acquired popularity. All classes of people thronged to call upon him, and upon all conceivable pretences. Many were really friendly, and wished to show their good will, in which operation they managed to consume a great deal of valuable time. But the majority were purely selfish. Some wanted pledges of future favors. Some demanded pay direct for their influence, which, according to their own account, was positively enormous. And not a few desired to know his opinions on subjects which, although of first importance in their eyes, could have no possible connection with any of his prospective duties. Becoming utterly disheartened and disgusted with these visitations, he at last fled to his private office, and there sought refuge from his persecutors.

Then it was that Tom Sponge's

services became invaluable. That public spirited individual not only remained behind to confront the multitude, but immensely enjoyed the excitement, and still more the importance the situation gave him. Decked out in his richest attire, he most graciously received and entertained the crowd in his employer's stead. Having a thorough knowledge of nearly all comers, he adroitly adapted himself to their several wants and pre-conceptions, giving the most conflicting assurances in his principal's name with a facility and condescension that was truly inimitable. As a public man he was a staunch believer in the doctrine of the end justifying the means.

Tom was now truly in his element. He entered into the pending canvass with all his soul. His philippic against Tammany was repeated to every one whose ear he could possibly secure. Seated in his employer's office with three or four sympathetic listeners about him, no king upon his throne could have been half as great. But the measure of his happiness was completely filled when, at last, his name appeared in the list of speakers who were advertised to address the people. In almost uncontrollable delight he stood upon the sidewalk and gazed upon the great poster which, in stunning capitals, from the dead wall of an adjacent building, announced that, "The Hon. Thomas Sponge, with other distinguished speakers, will this evening, at Shoemakers' Hall, address the public in behalf of the People's Anti-Tammany and Universal Reform ticket." So enjoyable

was the sight that for a considerable time he stood unable to see or think of anything else. Suddenly, however, a thought entered his mind which hurried him away in the utmost trepidation. He had his toilet to make. With the least possible delay—for the hour was near at hand—he prepared himself for the grand occasion. His appearance, as he took a last survey of himself in his mirror, it would be impossible adequately to describe. His hair was accurately parted in the middle; his neck-tie was of the very latest and gayest pattern; vest and shirt-bosom were spotlessly white; and his entire outfit was faultlessly imposing.

The misfortune was, that the place selected for the meeting was in one of the quarters of the city where audiences usually assembled in shirt sleeves and short jackets. They had no appreciation of the latest fashions, and rather a distaste to anything like respectable, not to say elegant, apparel. That fact the speaker who preceded Tom fully comprehended. He appeared before the people in a very shabby coat, out at both elbows, and with a great rent under each arm, and with no sign of a neck-tie of any description whatever. The consequence was that he had a most hearty reception. But when Tom presented himself in all the splendor of his finished make-up, the amazement of his audience was intense. They inspected the singular being before them with as great curiosity as they would have one of Darwin's original men; and, but for Tom's inevitable trouble with his throat, he

might have got half through his speech before they could have recovered from their astonishment. But, as it was, with his "ughs" and his "ha," they recovered the use of their tongues as soon as he did his, and as soon began to use them.

"My Fellow Citizens, ugh! ugh! I can tell you all about Tammany. (A solitary 'ugh' from the crowd.) I have myself been a victim of Tammany's proscription. ('Ugh!' 'ugh!' from a dozen voices.) Fellow Citizens, (a general 'ugh!') we have a common interest in putting down (more 'ughs!') the ('ugh!')—the ('ugh!')—the—" but at this point the chorus of 'ughs' completely drowned the speaker's voice. It was in vain that he attempted to make himself understood. Again and again the same response greeted his most desperate efforts; until, losing his temper, he frantically danced up and down the platform and denounced the whole assemblage before him as a mob of Tammany's hirelings. It mattered very little what he called them, as not one word was distinguishable in the uproar. How long the struggle might have continued, it is quite impossible to tell, had not a butcher boy, on his way homeward with a calf's heart done up in a piece of brown paper, and attracted to the meeting by the crowd, suddenly stripped off the cover and hurled his expected breakfast at the orator with such accuracy of aim as to strike him fairly in the breast. Tom's vest and shirt-bosom were, in consequence, covered with blood. A cry that the speaker had been shot was raised, and the meeting broke up in

a fearful tumult. The gas was turned off and the crowd finally dispersed by the police from fear of a riot.

CHAPTER IX.

THE PARTY STILL TO TAKE CARE OF HIM.

MEANWHILE matters in Willowford were jogging along pretty much in the old ruts. Perry Doubleman was still postmaster, although there had been a change of national administration, and at least half a dozen disappointed patriots of the successful party, who had vainly hoped to be his successor, had denounced the newly-elected President in such plain terms that he must have trembled in his official chair, had he but heard them. With Hugh Maintland affairs had grown no better. For the last year or two his crops had been lighter than ever before; more of his cattle had perished of disease; and his wife, never strong, had had several bad attacks, so that there had been doctor's bills to pay. He still retained possession of the farm, notwithstanding he had twice been behindhand with the full amount of the rent. Expulsion from his home would, doubtless, have been the consequence—for although Colonel Kortright had never made allusion to the disagreement between his tenant and himself, described in one of the earlier chapters of this book, he was not a man either to forget or forgive such an occurrence—had it not been for Clinton's timely assistance. His father had never asked him for mo-

ney, for while he retained his bodily health and strength, Hugh Maintland was too proud to beg even of his own son; but, managing to keep himself advised as to the true condition of his father's finances, Clinton had, upon one pretext or another, sent forward remittances which happened to supply deficiencies likely to exist on rent day.

In other respects there had been no marked departure from the beaten round either in Hugh Maintland's or Willowford's affairs. Both were obstinately conservative. Hugh himself, Amos Grupp and Jonas Phips were as fast personal and political friends as ever, meeting almost daily in Perry Doubleman's store to read the old favorite journals, discuss the old subjects, and arrive at the old, old conclusions. An event, however, was about to occur that was destined not merely to bring a new sensation to Willowford, but to put even the friendship of the trio just named to the test.

Colonel Kortright, having filled several official positions with credit to himself and satisfaction to the public, aspired to a seat in the Congress of the United States. It was a matter of no difficulty for him to secure a nomination from his party; but an election by the people threatened to be quite a different affair. The strength of the opposing parties in the district was so nearly equal that a few votes either way might turn the scale. After carefully going over the whole ground, Kortright reached the conclusion that, if he could secure the entire vote of his own town of Willowford, his election was cer-

tain ; otherwise the result would be very doubtful. A little further reflection satisfied him that to accomplish that most desirable point, it was necessary that he should secure the support of Hugh Maintland, whose influence with his neighbors of the same party was so great that they would, without doubt, be guided by his recommendation. The conclusion was by no means an agreeable one ; for, while his position as landlord would necessarily give him great weight with his tenant, he knew that he would be an exceedingly hard man to turn against his political convictions. He distinctly, and even wrathfully, remembered how Hugh Maintland had stood up to his face and successfully defended his opinions, when all others had shrunk from before his superior presence. Still the case was so urgent that the experiment had to be tried.

While meditating upon the best course to reach his self-willed tenant, Kortright read in a New York journal a full account of the People's Anti-Tammany and Universal Reform movement in opposition to the highest regular party authority, and of Clinton Maintland's participation in its proceedings. The circumstance gave him great encouragement. He knew the pride Hugh Maintland had taken in the success of his son, and what confidence he had in his judgment. If the son could disregard party obligation and pursue an independent course, it was likely that the father would be the more inclined to do the same thing. Colonel Kortright was

resolved that the opportunity should not be missed. Accordingly he lost no time in putting himself in Hugh Maintland's way.

"I see," he remarked, with a gracious smile, at the same time warmly shaking his tenant's hand, "that your boy, Clinton, is making his mark in the world. He is really acquitting himself very finely. A noble stand he has taken in the interest of good and honest government against a long-continued system of abuse. I must congratulate you, sir, upon having such a son."

Hugh Maintland made no immediate reply. Instead of showing in his countenance the satisfaction a compliment from such a source would ordinarily produce, he suffered his head to drop, and a look of pain passed over his features. At last, with an effort, he firmly met his landlord's gaze, and observed :

"I am glad to hear your good opinion of my boy. There is much to be said in his favor. His heart, I doubt not, is right, much as I regret the course he has seen fit to pursue. A father finds it easy to attribute an error on the part of his child to youth and inexperience."

"What!" exclaimed Kortright, in a voice of unaffected surprise, "do I understand you to say that your son's course meets with your disapproval? I am amazed."

"It most certainly does," replied Clinton's father solemnly. "I am a Conservative. I believe that the principles that are to be found with the Conservative party can alone save the government from ultimate dissolution ; and for a son of mine,

brought up under my own instruction in the indoctrination of those principles, to be found allying himself with my party's enemies, does, indeed, give me great pain. My feelings are those of a father, sir."

How sincere this declaration was, appeared in the tremulous voice of the great strong man as he spoke.

"But, sir," answered Kortright in a tone that was intended to be both conciliatory and persuasive, "you lay entirely too much stress, in my judgment, upon the mere fact of party discipline. Principle and party may be, and often are, very different things. Your son, in my estimation, entitles himself to much higher regard for the independence he has shown of that authority, which, general as it is, is too often the result merely of habit and education. Indeed, sir, I had hoped, after the example that has been given by your son, to find you so far free from this party prejudice, that you could give me your support in the approaching election."

"It cannot be, sir."

"Cannot be?"

"Not from any disrespect to you, Colonel Kortright, personally; but because, as a party candidate, you are the representative of policies the success of which I sincerely believe would be disastrous to the nation. I should deserve to be set down as my country's enemy, should I, entertaining such views, so far outrage my principles as to give you my vote."

"Have a care, Hugh Maintland," angrily exclaimed Colonel Kortright, as he listened to these words, "what language you use. Do I understand

you that I am, in your opinion, an enemy to the country?"

"Not at all, Colonel Kortright," quietly rejoined Maintland. "I do not impugn your motives in the least. You have the same right to your political beliefs that I have to mine. What I mean is that, with our different opinions, I cannot consistently support you as a candidate; nor could you, were I a candidate, consistently support me."

"Quite sufficient on that point, neighbor Maintland," said Kortright condescendingly, a gracious smile returning to his ruffled features. "Your explanation is quite sufficient. I beg your pardon for misunderstanding you, for the apology should be mine. And now, neighbor, that matter being set right between us, I have something else to say to you—something in which we are both immediately interested."

Maintland, by a look of inquiry, invited the speaker to proceed.

"You and I, Hugh Maintland," the Colonel went on, "have known each other from boyhood. Our fathers were neighbors and friends before us. We have had our disagreements, and now belong, as the language used in such matters is, to different political parties. But the question is whether, by our party associations, we have not, after all, permitted ourselves to be more widely separated than we ought to be? We have been differently educated; and, if we go down to the bottom of our feelings, will we not find that our prejudices have had quite as much to do in forming our political opinions as our principles?"

"Quite likely."

"As I was saying," resumed Colonel Kortright, encouraged to proceed by his companion's seeming acquiescence, "there is something else to be considered in politics beside abstractions. Very few, while professing the utmost devotion to principle, in such matters wholly lose sight of their personal interests, and, as the world goes, is it not right and proper that that point should receive reasonable attention?"

"As the world goes, undoubtedly."

"Now you are a poor man, Hugh Maintland," resumed Kortright, still more encouraged to proceed, "and I am what the world calls a rich one. I am a candidate for an office upon which I set great value. I need and desire your assistance to obtain it; but I have no right to ask you to labor for me without returning an equivalent. If I am profited by your agency, it would be but fair that you should derive some corresponding advantage. It is so the world goes. Thus far I hope we understand each other."

"Go on," said Maintland calmly, although a close observer might have noticed a quicker heaving of the chest that indicated that all was not so still within.

"Now what I have further to say is this," resumed Kortright with an assurance in his look and voice which clearly showed his confidence that what he was going to say would be entirely satisfactory. "You can, by exerting your influence with your party, give me the vote of this town. That ensures my election. I, on the

other hand, can confer upon you something that may be to you of equal value. The farm you live upon is mine. It may be in my power soon to dispossess you of it, and turn you out, as old age is coming on you, penniless upon the world. The place is one you, doubtless, highly estimate. It is your home; where you were born; where you have lived all your life. Now, Hugh Maintland, use your influence to give me the vote of Willowford, and the day after the election I give you a clear title to the farm."

"Is that all?"

The question was asked by Hugh Maintland, as if the matter was one scarcely deserving of consideration.

"Is it not enough?" inquired Kortright, with manifest surprise.

"Yes, Colonel Kortright," replied Maintland, his whole manner suddenly changing, his eye flashing with anger, and his voice swelling to tones of thunder. "It is enough to show that you have insulted me as foully as one man was ever insulted by another. You would buy my vote—my right and badge of citizenship — my political birthright. You would give me a farm for my manhood—and that you call a neighborly act—that is your magnanimity. Colonel Kortright, I am a poor man—a very poor man; because the sweat of my face, beyond what has been required to feed my family, has gone to swell your wealth—and you are a rich man—a very rich man; but, let me tell you that, after what has this day transpired between us, were you the candidate of my own party, instead of my po-

litical adversaries, all your riches would not be sufficient to purchase my support. Good-day, sir."

With that Hugh Maintland turned upon his heel and strode away, leaving his landlord too much confounded for some minutes to stir from the spot.

When Maintland reached Doubleman's store—for he was on his way there when Colonel Kortright had encountered him—he at once related the whole occurrence to Grupp, Phips, and a half dozen other leading Conservatives that happened to be present. Their indignation was so intense that it was at once decided that a meeting of all the members of their party in Willowford should be called to denounce, in proper terms, the dishonorable means the candidate of the opposition had sought to employ for the defeat of their party.

The meeting in due time was held. Maintland stated the facts in the case; speeches were made, in which a great deal of virtuous denunciation was indulged, and the proceedings concluded with a series of stirring resolutions, prepared and submitted by Phips, and unanimously adopted, one of which declared that, "Inasmuch as our esteemed fellow-citizen and fellow-Conservative, Hugh Maintland, in defending the purity of the ballot and the integrity of our party, has not merely rejected an offer of wealth, but incurred a liability to pecuniary loss and suffering as the price of his fidelity, we hereby pledge him, in addition to our sympathies, such material assistance as will, should the necessity arise, fully

protect him against all loss to be incurred for conscience's sake."

The result of the affair was that Colonel Kortright, being beaten in Willowford, lost the election in the district.

CHAPTER X.

CONDUCTING A CANVASS.

THE People's Anti-Tammany and Universal Reform party began with the blowing of many trumpets. Numerous meetings were held to explain its purposes and advance its interests, and at first a most encouraging popular response was met with. Clinton Maintland's voice, among others, was heard in elucidation and vindication of its aims, and none secured a more patient and discriminative audience. But of all those who distinguished themselves in the great popular movement, the most vehement in asserting its claims to support, the most denunciatory of its opponents, and especially of Tammany and its principal leader, and the most applauded of all its orators, was Windsham. He outdid all his previous efforts, both in zeal and eloquence. Browbeat, too, did yeoman's service; and Striker, having succeeded in finding a good-natured audience, made what was acknowledged to be a great "hit." Nor was Tom Sponge without his successes. Warned by his reception at Shoemakers' Hall to appear only before assemblages that showed in their apparel a taste approximating to his own, he delivered his philippic

against Tammany with great effect on several occasions. But of all who were in the work, not one was so full of life and fire as Scourge. His *Sunday Plague* was now issued seven days in the week, so great was the demand it met with; and, when it appeared, it fairly blazed with the passionate force of its conductor's fiery temper. Nothing was too harsh, and, for that matter, too absurd, to be applied by it to Tammany and Seacrist.

All this did very well for a time; and, if there had been an open and energetic resistance to keep up the excitement and interest of the contest, or, in fact, to make any contest at all, there could have been no question of a successful issue to the movement. But this was not to be. Tammany resorted to tactics that were the very opposite of those followed by the new party leaders. It did not disband its organization, nor show any backwardness in its accustomed preparations; it submitted its nominations and performed the other routine work of the canvass with perfect regularity; but did everything so quietly and confidently that many began to conclude that the demonstrations against it were nothing but sound and fury after all, and would soon blow over. The result was that the new party's meetings gradually became less and less plentiful in attendance, and less and less demonstrative in character—even Windsham failing to awaken the enthusiasm with which his first efforts had been attended; and Scourge's *Plague* was driven by lack of patronage, first to a tri-weekly,

then to a semi-weekly, and finally to its old seventh-day edition.

All this time Tammany was by no means idle. It was perfectly conscious of its peril, and every man in its confidence was diligently, but quietly, at work. Grulls, the great liquor dealer, went the entire round of the city's drinking places, and had long and confidential talks with their proprietors. Hargate had never been so active with the class of men of which he was the ruling spirit. Alderman Skipp was constantly on the move, mingling with those of congenial tastes, and mixing bets on the running powers of Lady Jane and his favorite ticket in a way that was wonderfully confusing. And, as for the Seacrists, although never so undemonstrative, they had never been so busy. Barton Seacrist held long and secret conferences with many people, some of whom, oddly enough, were publicly recognized as among the most zealous of the new party's members, and who were confidently intrusted with all its secrets; while Kate, undisturbed by calls from either the house of Goaring or Barnabas, and even discarding to a considerable extent the attentions of Mademoiselle Cathron, sat with pallid cheek, and often with aching brow, through the long day, and sometimes far into the waning night, inditing editorials, correspondence, criticism, and even mots and puns and pithy epigrams for the *Rocket* and other journals in her father's interest.

But the People's Anti-Tammany and Universal Reform Party had not only to contend with a policy of mas-

terly inactivity on the part of its opponents ; it had internal troubles of its own.

The Progressionists, having no possible chance of carrying the day by themselves, had been confidently relied upon to go boldly into the new movement, and to that effect at first seemed to be the disposition of all its members. But ere long there arose among them a faction that violently denounced the proposed arrangement, and strenuously insisted upon entirely independent action. Its leaders were resolved to have nothing to do with Conservatives under any circumstances, and, by cunningly appealing to the party prejudices of their fellows, they succeeded in drawing off a considerable element, whose strength was lost to the new party. At the head of this faction was Cinnamon Smooth.

But disagreement of a still more malignant nature soon broke out in the bosom of the new organization. Personal rivalries and jealousies began to appear. The management of the affairs of the party was intrusted to a committee of forty, of which, to ensure entire impartiality, twenty members were selected from the Progressionists, and twenty from the Anti-Tammany Conservatives. Senator Bloom aspired to the chairmanship of the body ; and, owing to his early and faithful services in the cause, secured the enthusiastic support of all his fellow-Conservatives ; but it so happened that all the Progressionists tenaciously adhered to one of their own number. Valuable time was lost by this controversy, and, when it was at last settled by

the unexplained absence of a Conservative, and the consequent election of the Progressionist candidate by a majority of one, Bloom and some of his devoted adherents, charging fraud upon their victorious adversaries, took up their hats and walked out of the room, never more to return. The result of this secession was the necessity for the committee's re-organization ; while the indignant Bloom and his followers, returning to their old allegiance, were more devoted supporters of Tammany than ever.

Nor was that all. The committee's newly-elected chairman, who had been the cause of the trouble, and who was selected for the position because of that sort of respectability which precluded all practical knowledge of political management, soon found the duties of the place so distasteful that he gave it up in disgust, and quit the movement altogether. Then the difficulty was, not in deciding upon the claims of rival aspirants, but in finding any one willing to be his successor. At length, after every other man on the committee had respectfully declined the honor, the station was conferred upon the only one willing to accept it, who happened to be our old friend, Tom Sponge.

Tom was now in his glory. The outfits in which he appeared to preside over the meetings of that august assembly, were truly wonderful. It really seemed as though the measure of his ambition were full. But Tom did not find the seat to be one of roses. A difficulty arose out of an unexpected and totally irrecon-

cilable quarrel of two of the committee's foremost members. The disputants were no other than the former Damon and Pythias of the movement, Browbeat and Striker. Each aspired to be leader. Both were men of many words and much tenacity of will, and, if one advocated one side of a proposition, the other invariably championed the other. At first the most polished courtesy was observed in their discussions; but in time the boundaries of decorum were passed. Sharp words passed between them, and then hot speeches were followed by insulting looks and acts. Great was the contempt which each in his countenance expressed whenever the other arose to make a few remarks. At last even attention was denied. If Browbeat took the floor to say a few words, Striker would turn his back and begin to converse with his nearest neighbor; and if Striker was the talker, Browbeat would retaliate in equally offensive manner.

It was in vain that Sponge, who, as presiding officer, discharged the duties of his responsible position with great acceptability, endeavored to maintain the peace. A collision was inevitable.

Striker was on his feet, more than ordinarily earnest in urging his views upon some important proposition, and Browbeat, as usual, was whispering half aloud in the ear of a very patient neighbor who was trying to hear both speakers at the same time, when the orator, catching what he supposed to be an insulting remark from his enemy, stopped, and fixing his eye upon him, hissed

out that, "It was to be regretted that people would come among gentlemen, who did not know how to be gentlemen themselves."

Instantly Browbeat, who had pretended not to be listening to the speaker at all, was on his feet, demanding to know if that observation was intended for him.

"If the shoe fits, wear it," was the cool reply.

"You are a scoundrel!"

"You are a ——"

Before the last sentence was finished the two men were rushing furiously at each other. Sponge, who as presiding officer had vainly endeavored to quell the tumult, sprang in between them just in time to receive the blow which each intended for his adversary. So intent, however, were the pugilists upon their bloody work, that neither discovered his mistake, and both continued to pummel away at their innocent victim most furiously, until drawn off by kindly intervention, leaving Sponge almost in a state of pulverization.

The result of this unhappy occurrence was, not merely that the committee was for several days deprived of the valuable services of its chairman, but the next day after the battle each party to it sent in a letter of withdrawal, alleging his unwillingness to be associated with any body in which the other was tolerated. On the same day the two men met in the presence of Barton Seacrist, each having gone to make terms with Tammany's leader, and, by his persuasion, they shook hands, agreed to forgive and forget, and became faster

friends than ever. Nor was that all the trouble. Both Browbeat and Striker had their personal friends on the committee, who likewise withdrew and followed their leaders to Tammany, creating a necessity for another reorganization.

Yet another and more serious difficulty in time confronted the conductors of the new party. That was the lack of money. At first, when excitement was at fever heat, a fund quite sufficient for all the expenses of the campaign had been collected; but, as every one prominent in the work was allowed access to the treasury, the supply was soon exhausted; and then it was found all but impossible to obtain adequate contribution. What made the dilemma the more vexations was the fact that, at this precise crisis, Scourge declared that his losses and sacrifices for the cause had been such that he must have pecuniary assistance. With much difficulty a fund was raised and paid over to him.

On the very day the money was received by him, Scourge was closeted with Barton Seacrist. On the next, the *Sunday Plague* contained the following:

"THE SPONGE COMMITTEE.

"A sense of journalistic duty impels us to expose one of the most flagrant impositions ever attempted to be practiced upon a credulous community. It is the mission of the *Plague* to show up all knaves, hypocrites, and false pretenders. How fearlessly we shall do our duty, let the public judge from the revelation we are about to make. There is a body of men in this city, styling itself a committee, which is engaged in trying to obtain money from well meaning

people, upon the plea that it is working in the interest of political reform. Never was there a more false and fraudulent misrepresentation. The members of that committee are not laboring for the public good at all. They are seeking only their own private and selfish interests. They are impostors. Whoever complies with their demands is imposed upon—swindled. To prove that we do not mis-state the case with regard to this committee, it is only necessary to mention the fact that its chairman is one Sponge, a noisy, foppish, shallow creature, with limited brains and much presumption, who has for years led the life of a vagrant and a leech upon the benevolent. By the help of some of the more respectable of the sham reformers and his own impertinence, he has at last succeeded in reaching a position that gives him a still better opportunity to practice his knavish tricks. His career, however, is at an end. The *Sunday Plague* has sealed his doom. Let all beware of Sponge and his bogus committee."

But while Barton Seacrist and his political confederates had been apparently inactive, it was not from inertia, but at first to disintegrate and demoralize their adversaries, and afterwards to strike them a more telling blow. The time to show their hands and their power had come. An announcement was at last made that Tammany would have a public demonstration. No great preparation was to be seen—merely enough to awaken public curiosity—but secretly the most careful and elaborate provision had been instituted. For days, and even weeks, Skipp and Grulls, and Hargate, and all of Tammany's faithful adherents, were busy among their retainers getting them ready for the grand event. No money was spared. Torches, and banners, and transparencies were accumulated in almost unlimited quantity, and

hundreds and thousands of men, many of them hired and brought in from abroad for the purpose, were liberally paid to bear them aloft and help swell the grand procession. Never had New York seen such a display. Alderman Skipp, mounted upon Lady Jane, and filling the role of Grand Marshal, had never been so proud; and Grulls, and Hargate, and Browbeat and Striker—the two last named riding side by side—at the head of their respective followers, filled positions almost as conspicuous. It was, indeed, a most wonderful pageant, as the vast procession went sweeping through the streets of the great city. Torches blazed, cannons roared, music rose and swelled upon the air, and the cheers of thousands who carried the price of their enthusiasm in their pockets, made the occasion a transcendent and tremendous success. And when the ground where the public speaking was to be—for no hall in the city would have held a tithe of that vast assemblage—was reached, acres and acres of people were crowded round the stands. Upon the principal platform, as presiding officer, was Senator Bloom, while Scourge, of the *Sunday Plague*, occupied a position in close proximity, both supremely happy in the giddy triumph of the hour.

But wonderful as all this exhibition was—except to the cunning hands that had set the machinery in motion—and strangely fascinating to the majority of lookers-on, a greater surprise was still in store. The evening was well-nigh spent; the principal orators had made their

rousing appeals; Browbeat and Striker had both been heard; the enthusiasm of the assembly had risen higher and higher, when a man, tall, spare, and with closely-shaven face, was seen ascending the principal platform, whose countenance was familiar to many in the crowd. The cry of "Windsham! Windsham!" was raised first by one or two voices; but soon "Windsham! Windsham!" was heard from all parts of the throng. The tall man, bowing profoundly, and with a gracious smile upon his face, stepped forward and began to address the people. He boldly proclaimed that he had been following after "strange political gods," but expressed his supreme satisfaction at finding himself once more at the shrine of St. Tammany. He freely made sport of his late party associates, perpetrating his best jokes at their expense, and convulsing his audience with laughter by the caricatures he drew of their performances, and then concluded his harangue with an appeal such as only Windsham knew how to make, exhorting his hearers to stand by the old party, the old principles, and the old men, all of which he eulogized in the most exalted terms. He concluded amid thunders of applause from the partisans of Tammany, who saw in him what they supposed to be the chief leader of the opposition won over to their cause; and the great assembly gradually dispersed with the wildest manifestations of delight.

The effect of this demonstration was precisely what Barton Seacrist, with his thorough knowledge of po-

lities, calculated it would be. He knew how the enthusiasm and the pageant had been created, and how much of both was unreal; but the public did not. They supposed that the exhibition had been a genuine expression of political feeling. It in consequence completely changed the current of public opinion. Those who had before talked about Tammany being dead, now declared that the bottom had fallen out of the opposition movement. Men of character were unaffected; but the political drift-wood that had been carried away in the first excitement attending the organization of the People's Anti-Tammany and Universal Reform party, quickly drifted back to the old moorings. Barton Seacrist received all who, having temporarily strayed away, returned to renew their allegiance, kindly and with no demonstration either of exultation or resentment. His power over them was more firmly established than ever.

During these events Clinton Maintland, as we have already seen, was not unemployed, nor is it to be supposed that he was uninterested. There were times, it is true, when disgusted with the insincerity, intrigue and selfishness of which he was unavoidably a witness, and nettled at the abuse and misrepresentation to which he and his friends were exposed, he internally execrated politics, and heartily wished himself back to his clients and his books; but that feeling could not long be predominant. Ambition gradually made its way to his heart, and, as he listened to the applause of

audiences delighted with his words, or contemplated the positions of trust and usefulness that stood out before him in the line of possible promotion, he was forced to acknowledge that a political life had unexpected attractions.

There was another inducement to the course he was pursuing. He had not forgotten Kate Seacrist. He could not help but think of her; and there were times when he even believed that he still loved her. He tried to drive her image from his thoughts; for what business had it there? But the struggle would go on, and then the excitement of politics was a relief. At such times he would fly to the noise and tumult and contention of the conflict that was raging about him, to find peace.

There was one check, however, upon his enthusiasm—one drop of bitter in the stimulating cup that grew more grateful to his taste the more he partook of its contents, and that he found in the following letter:

WILLOWFORD, N. Y.

MY DEAR SON: I need not inform you how much I have been surprised, as the story is told by the journals of your city, at your, to me, unaccountable political conduct. I wish that were all I had to say concerning it; but truth compels me to add that I am most profoundly pained by the intelligence.

Surely you will not wonder at the sorrow thus expressed, in view of what you know to be my life-long political convictions. I have too often, in your presence, to need repetition here, given expression to the belief, and the grounds upon which it rests, that the Constitution—which is but another term for the government under which we live—is alone safe in Conservative hands; and that all so-called Progressionists are

simply Jacobius and destructionists who would bring inevitable ruin upon the country. I know that by some I am looked upon as an extremist in my views, and it is possible that your later associations may incline you to that opinion; but let me say that I have given the subject the best consideration of which I am capable—that I am now an old man—and that the conclusion just avowed is the result of a life-time's study. Opinions thus formed are not to be lightly rejected. I never dreamed that a son of mine could so soon cast them to the winds, and take up his portion with fanatical Progressionists, and—still worse—Conservative renegades. Of all men my greatest distrust—you will pardon the seeming censure—has ever been for the deserter.

I frankly admit that my party may err—that it is not infallible—that it may have bad men in it, and over it—but with all its errors, while it remains the custodian of true principles of government, it is an infinitely safer dependence than an organization without principles, or with principles at war with the teachings of the Constitution. Of all things, beware of the heresy that a patriot cannot be a party-man. Hence I am especially pained to see you at war with Tammany Hall, the accepted leader of Conservatism. It matters not that Tammany itself may be corrupt—while it stands as the party's head, its authority should be implicitly obeyed. I have always had a sincere reverence for Tammany.

Now, my dear son, grieved as I am by the course you have seen fit to pursue, I am not without hope that your error is of the head, rather than of the heart—that you have been led away by some temporary caprice—and that you will yet find your way back to the faith, not merely of your father, but of the country's fathers. And by all means, let me exhort you to return to Tammany, even as the Prodigal Son returned to his forgiving father, that your peace may once more be made. This is the appeal that comes from a loving and trusting parent's heart.

We are all in bodily health. Your mother is anxious lest you may overheat yourself at political meetings. She advises prudence

and Baldwin's Anti-Caloric Stimulator. I have had a disagreement with Colonel Kortright, growing out of a political dispute. It is probable that, in consequence, he will dispossess me of the farm, as I shall not have the full amount of the rent by next pay-day. I have, however, asserted my convictions, and my conscience is clear.

As ever, your loving father,

HUGH MAINTLAND.

Clinton was deeply troubled by the foregoing epistle. Had it come a little sooner, it might have changed his whole course of political action. While but partially sympathizing with his father's views, he was too dutiful a son not to feel most keenly the fact of having brought sorrow to a loving parent's heart. The feeling thus created, was, however, in part counteracted by the following, which arrived at the same time:

DEER NEFYU: I'm a feared yur gittin intu deap water. I sea by the papers, which I generally don't read, that yur a candydade. That was what I was a feared wood cum when yu wood go tu New York. I new yu had a hed fur sumthin great, and hens I feared tha wood try too draw yu in. Yu may be rite and yu may be rong. I take no stock in parties, and never cood make hed nor tale of N. Y. poletix. But rite or rong, my fears exist, and I want yu tu let me no rite off if yu git intu trubbel. Remember yur promis tu

Yur luvn Unkle,

MARTIN SWARTWOUT.

CHAPTER XI.

A FLAG PRESENTATION.

As was to be expected in so important and spirited a contest, a candidate was placed in opposition to Clinton Maintland, who was another

of our acquaintances, Gordon Seacrist. That so young and inexperienced a person—in everything appertaining to the duties of the position to which he aspired—should be selected for so responsible a trust, might have appeared surprising had he not been Barton Seacrist's son. As it was, his father's name and influence were quite sufficient to insure the young man the support of the party whose votes he had a right to expect. The secret of his candidacy, however, was that, having understood a seat in the Legislature to be the gateway to sundry profitable business enterprises in whose emoluments he was anxious to share, he had gone to his father and demanded a nomination under the threat of joining in the People's Anti-Tammany and Universal Reform movement, and making certain disclosures that would have been most damaging in their nature. Barton Seacrist, unable to resist the filial appeal, when supported by such formidable arguments, and perhaps concluding that his son was in no event likely to be greatly worsted by a participation in politics, yielded the point, and Gordon's name went upon the Tammany ticket. Scourge, of the *Sunday Plague*, had at first attacked the young gentleman with great severity, charging upon him certain practices that were very far from being to his credit; but then Scourge, after his reconciliation with Tammany, made it all right by declaring that Gordon was "a chip of the old block," and that "the trunk from which he grew was sound timber to the core."

It thus happened that Margaret

Kortright, who, it will be recollected from the information communicated in the last chapter of the preceding Book, was now Gordon Seacrist's betrothed, was often reminded of her old acquaintance and boy-lover, Clinton Maintland. True, the intelligence she received was not generally of a very complimentary character, coming either from Tammany organs or from her husband-elect. Yet it made her think of him very often—especially after her recent singular meeting with him in an act of mutual benevolence—and sometimes she felt very sad to reflect that one whom she remembered so kindly, had proved himself so unworthy of her regard. She, indeed, pitied him very much.

Gordon failed not to keep his bride-to-be fully advised as to all that was interesting in the campaign. Every time he saw her he had something new to communicate, displaying either astonishing weakness or folly on the part of the Anti-Tammany people, or corresponding sharpness on the other side—the latter view being usually enforced by some incident of which the relator was the hero. It is true that Margaret did not see much of her lover—not as much, by any means, as she desired; for, as was her duty to be, she was very fond of him. But then Gordon was so busy with political matters that he could not afford to give her much of his valuable time. He had, according to his own account, nearly the entire responsibility of his party upon his shoulders. The number of meetings and consultations he had to attend, and

which could not possibly get along without him, was astonishing.

To show how fully his time was taken up by his political duties, it is only necessary to recount his usual round of engagements. After dinner it was his custom to call for a short time on the ladies—that is, Margaret and her cousin, Clara Balford—giving them a hasty *résumé* of the situation, and then, as there was to be an important meeting that evening which he had to attend, he would hurry away. The meeting referred to was made up of the usual *habitués* of his party headquarters, with whom he was accustomed to spend an hour in smoking cigars and discussing the news and probabilities of the canvass; and then, finding the time growing heavy on his hands, he would sally forth to engage in the arduous labors of electioneering. That business ordinarily took him to sundry popular resorts, where he spent a good deal of time and some money in cultivating the good opinion of their frequenters, and playing a few games at billiards with such particular friends as he might chance to meet. By the time he had gone the round of these establishments, the hour of midnight had usually come, when, in company with a few choice spirits, whom he generally managed to pick up, he would proceed to Abel Cummager's, there to pass what remained of the night. The following day was given to repose—a disposition necessary to recruit his exhausted energies, and prepare him for a renewal of his onerous tasks.

But apart from the pressure which

his labors as a candidate imposed upon his time, it must be admitted that one reason why Gordon was so inattentive as a lover, was the fact that, much as he adored Margaret herself, he did not particularly care for her society. It imposed upon him a certain restraint, which, in spite of his devotion, was irksome. In wooing her, he had not, with his natural ease and plausibility, found it very difficult to assume a character which was somewhat constrained, but which, when the victory was won, he did find it hard to continue. When in her presence it was necessary for him to keep guard over certain familiar expressions and opinions which he was constantly in danger of letting slip. In fact, there was a lack of congeniality between them which he felt far more keenly as a lover than he thought he should as a husband, since the latter character, as he argued, gave much wider scope for natural demeanor.

There was another obstacle in the way. Margaret, while she tried to take an interest in the great contest to which her affianced was so prominent a party, did not really care for politics, and failed to appreciate some of the fine strategical points he was at great pains to explain to her, even going so far as sometimes to question their propriety. She was, as she frankly admitted, wholly unsuited for a politician.

Taking all these things together, it is no great wonder that Gordon should have confidentially remarked to Bill Travers, who was one of his particular friends, and had oblig-

ingly waited at a convenient saloon while he made a call of ceremony upon Margaret, that she was "a deuced superior girl, but something of a bore."

With Clara Batford, Gordon got along a great deal better. Somehow when alone with her, he felt a freedom that was wholly wanting when Margaret was by, and which was vastly agreeable. He, consequently, contrived to spend as much time with that sprightly young person as with his intended bride. She was a most ardent politician; took a very lively interest in the contest then going forward; fully entered into all of Gordon's plans and explanations; and over and over declared her regret that she had no vote to give against that horrid Clinton Maintland.

But ill adapted as Margaret was to a political life, and weary as she was growing of the talk about parties and canvasses and elections, she was not to escape a share in the pending conflict. Gordon, at one of his calls, submitted a most unusual request. On the following evening "The Gordon Seacrist Association" was to be publicly presented a banner, of which he was the donor, and which he wished her to deliver in his name.

"The Gordon Seacrist Association" was composed mainly of butcher boys connected with one of the city markets, and occupied a hall in a most unsavory quarter of the city. It was essentially a political club, and had at different times borne the names of a good many political leaders, sometimes of one party and

sometimes of another; but was, nevertheless, a most efficient organization on election day. It never failed to vote its full strength—sometimes, when there was pressing necessity, several times over—and was a most convenient body in case the public good required the forcible taking possession of a voting-place or the smashing of a ballot-box. Gordon Seacrist enjoyed the distinguished honor—for which he had handsomely paid—of supplying the Association its latest name, with a pledge of its fullest support in the pending contest; and in part acknowledgment of so flattering a compliment, was about to have presented to it a beautiful banner, emblazoned with a picture of the American eagle bearing aloft a scroll and motto of *vox populi vox dei*, which he had had prepared at considerable expense. He wanted Margaret to make the formal presentation. The speech to be repeated on the delivery of the standard to the President of the Association had been prepared by Bill Travers, and all that was necessary was for her to commit it to memory, and speak it at the proper time and place.

Margaret at first declined the meditated honor, not from any disrespect to the Gordon Seacrist Association, which she had no doubt, from the name it bore, was a very respectable body, but from a sense of natural modesty. Clara, who happened to be present, at once began to urge her compliance.

"You will make the speech, won't you, Clara, if Margaret refuses?" asked Gordon, with a look that was

even more expressive than his words ; and which Margaret noticed.

"Yes, I will," was Clara's prompt reply.

Now Margaret was not jealous, even then ; but she could not help noticing the good understanding that seemed to exist between the other two.

"Very well ! if I must, I will," she said, and so it was settled.

Clara had a headache, and Margaret had to accompany Gordon alone. Going in a close carriage after night, she formed no idea of the character of the locality to which she was taken. She at last found herself in a small room off the main hall of the Association, where she could confusedly hear the mingled voices of rough men that came to her ears like the roar of so many caged animals—a sound by no means calculated to allay her nervousness. It was arranged that, at a given signal, with a green scarf over one shoulder, a starry crown upon her head, and the banner in her hand, she was to advance upon the platform to which the door from her room opened, and there, where the President of the Association, who was no other than Dennis Hargate, was to receive her, the presentation ceremony was to take place. But, by some miscalculation, the signal was given too soon ; and, while Gordon, the President, and other officers of the Association were in a neighboring saloon discussing sundry bottles of wine, Margaret marched upon the platform, flag in hand, and there, with no one to receive her, found herself standing

alone in the presence of the assembled multitude.

The butcher boys who made up the majority of the spectators, had got their notions of ladies who appear upon the stage in concert saloons ; and, as Margaret presented a really commanding appearance, they immediately began to testify their admiration in their accustomed way. No sooner, consequently, had she recovered from the consternation into which she was thrown by the storm of cheers, yells, and cat-calls with which she was greeted, than she found her ears saluted by comments upon her appearance, and observations addressed to herself, which, although intended to be complimentary, were totally unlike anything to which she had been used. Shocked and frightened almost to death, she dropped the flag, and fled from the building by the first door she came to. On she went, only anxious to escape from that horrible place, and soon found herself hurrying along a narrow, wretched street, filled with sights and people which at that hour seemed doubly frightful. Nor was her terror diminished by discovering, from the gaze she encountered and the shouts that followed her, that she was attracting general attention, in her fright having forgotten all about the scarf and crown she was wearing. On she pressed with increasing apprehension, until, in attempting to pass a knot of rough-looking men, she found her arm seized by a great burly fellow, who shouted out with a horrid laugh :

"Why so fast, now, me darlin'?"

Margaret struggled desperately to free herself, and, the sleeve of her dress giving way, she succeeded in tearing loose, and fled. Her persecutor, however, was not to be thus easily thwarted. He pursued, while his companions encouraged him with shouts and cheers. The race was a short one, and Margaret uttered a piteous scream as she felt the ruffian's hand upon her shoulder, and his nauseous breath swept across her cheek. But help was at hand.

Attracted by her outcry, a tall and well dressed gentleman who at that moment was passing, stopped and authoritatively ordered the villain to "unhand that woman."

Surprised by the command and the tone in which it was delivered, the fellow released his hold, and Margaret sprang to the side of her deliverer. But the danger was not over. The momentarily baffled scoundrel was still disposed for mischief. He once more stretched out his hand to seize Margaret, but was met with a blow that sent him reeling into the gutter; while her defender, enclosing Margaret's arm in his own, hurried her away. He was none to rapid in his movements. The fallen man quickly regained his feet, and his companions joining him, they gave chase, uttering fearful threats and imprecations. Owing to Margaret's fright and faintness, the race was an unequal one; but, luckily, the stranger, discovering a dark passage-way leading from the street, turned into it, dragging his companion with him; while their pursuers, not noticing the movement, went

cursing and howling by. In darkness and in ignorance of where they were going, the fugitives pressed silently on, Margaret so far overcome as to be scarcely able to walk, and heavily leaning upon her preserver's arm. A short distance brought them into a sort of inner court, unlighted, slippery and foul with garbage, and rank with unsavory odors. Here they stumbled about for a considerable time before an outlet could be discovered. At last another dark passage was found, and into it they ventured. Fortunately, it led them to a broad and well-lighted street, full of people and passing vehicles; and they were safe.

Up to this time not a word had passed between them; but here the stranger, turning to Margaret, asked, in a voice that was stern almost to harshness:

"Now, Miss, where is your home—if you have one?"

The speaker's voice softened a little on the concluding words; but the reproach conveyed by the suspicion they implied, so humiliated Margaret that she could only falter out in reply:

"Will you call a carriage, sir?"

The driver of a passing hack was signalled, and Margaret was assisted into it by her strange attendant.

"Now, where to, Miss?" he asked, giving a start of surprise when an up-town fashionable street was named in reply. Nevertheless, he gave the direction to the coachman, and then stepped back as if to walk away.

"Stop, sir! Let me thank you for——"

The coach was starting, and, in order to be heard, Margaret put forth her head in such a way that the light from a street lamp fell directly upon her face.

"Good heavens!" was the exclamation that at this point greeted her ears; and, at the same time, the first fair view she had got of her protector's visage revealed the astonished countenance of Clinton Maintland.

"Oh, Mr. Maintland, I wish to see—speak to you," exclaimed Margaret, eagerly, but in vain. The coach was rattling on, and her voice was lost in the noise of the wheels.

At first, overcome with a feeling of utter vexation and shame, Margaret threw herself back upon the carriage seat and burst into tears. But depressed as she was, both in body and mind, by the incidents through which she had just passed, her thoughts refused to be unemployed, and the object upon which they dwelt was very naturally the man from whom she had just separated—her early friend and play-fellow; but whom she had excluded from her presence as unworthy of all association. But, in the light of what had that night occurred, could he be so unworthy? Might there not be some mistake—some injustice? The affair of Alice Plain certainly did look very bad; but was a man so ready and brave to assist one whom he evidently took to be a poor fallen female, the person to wreck a woman for his own base pleasure? There was a mystery somewhere. But on one point Margaret was clear. She owed Clinton a debt of thanks for

what he had that night done, which could alone be properly discharged in person. She would send him a note the very next day, requesting an interview. And with that conclusion she reached her home.

The next day Margaret was too ill to rise from her bed. The excitement attendant upon her adventure had been too great for her strength. The day following she was worse, and a long and serious illness was the consequence. The note to Clinton was never written.

The surprise of Clinton Maintland on discovering who she was he had been assisting, may be easily imagined. The next day's *Rocket*, however, explained what had been the most incomprehensible feature of the affair—the presence of Margaret in that exceptional quarter of the city. It contained a glowing account of the flag presentation to the Gordon Seacrist Association, including a most flattering tribute to the beauty, grace and admirable self-possession of the aristocratic Miss Margaret Kortright, of No. — — — Street, who had patriotically consented to represent the donor in the most interesting ceremony, and whose remarks on the occasion it proceeded to quote at length. The report, which was the work of Bill Travers, had been prepared in anticipation of the event described, and duly forwarded in advance to the place of publication; and, consequently, was unaffected by the *fiasco* that followed.

As Clinton had heard a report of the engagement between Margaret and his political opponent, on read-

ing the *Rocket's* account, he understood all he cared to know concerning the affair. He, however, expected some acknowledgment of gratitude from the young lady, who, he saw, had recognized him at their parting. But as no such acknowledgment came, he made up his mind to dismiss her altogether from his thoughts—and so thought about her much more frequently than he had before.

As for Gordon, he was immensely chagrined at the unfortunate occurrence, and made every apology that was possible—which, as his inventive powers were excellent, embraced everything that could be required. Margaret's illness necessarily put a stop to all direct communication between the lovers; but Gordon's solicitude was such that he dutifully called every day to inquire after her health, and usually staid twice as long to explain the political situation to Clara as he had been accustomed to do when Margaret was able to be present. His deprivation, consequently, was not so great after all.

In one respect, however, the consequences to Gordon were serious and particularly provoking. Margaret's sickness involved a postponement of the wedding, which had been arranged to follow immediately after the election, that the pleasure-takings that ordinarily succeed to such an event, might be over before the newly-made husband would be called to enter upon the responsible duties of his official station; for of his triumphant election, he entertained no doubt. That, he declared, was already provided for. But now

the wedding-day was necessarily uncertain; and, in the meanwhile, certain obligations, partly growing out of the canvass, and partly out of transactions at Abel Cummager's, which he had relied upon his marriage to enable him to take care of, were pressing. Altogether, as he declared to Bill Travers, it was "confoundedly bad."

CHAPTER XII.

THE MOHICANS.

WHAT was to be the result of the canvass then going forward was even yet uncertain—a fact which no one understood so well as Barton Seacrist. Tammany, considering the disadvantages it had at first labored under, had done remarkably well; and its new party rival, in view of its opportunities, had managed very badly. Had they been the only parties in the field, the issue of the contest would no longer have been doubtful; but they were not the only parties to be taken into the calculation. There was still another organization from which nothing had been heard during the excitement of the canvass; and which was the more formidable because of its perfect quietude and non-committalism. That was the society of the Mohicans—the society of which Abel Cummager was the leader.

Cummager was a moral outlaw. Everybody looked upon him, and spoke of him, as a bad and dangerous man. Deliberately, and with profoundest calculation, he had set himself against society and its most

sacred laws. He lived and flourished by the vices of men. He was the proprietor of establishments that were constantly sending out corrupting streams to permeate and demoralize the social mass. The young and inexperienced were especially the victims of his influence. He won them to him by a system of enticements that laid the whole community under contribution. He seemed to delight in seeing how near he could go to the perilous edge of legal restraint, and escape the precipice.

A man so bold and aspiring, and with such resources of organization, was necessarily a leader. In a city like New York the material from which he was to form a following was most abundant. He soon gathered about him the worst elements of the metropolis. These he gradually compacted into a political association that could be wielded with terrible effectiveness in the contests which parties often nearly balanced, constantly waged against each other. It was an army of free lances, uncontrolled by any principle except that of self-interest, untrammelled by any allegiance save to its leader, and ready to combine with whatever faction offered it the highest inducement for co-operation.

Such was the Society of the Mohicans.

This organization had so far been perfectly quiescent, and its leader had attended all of Barton Seacrist's dinner gatherings without giving the slightest indication of any interest in the contest. Yet his assistance had become absolutely indispensable. The Mohicans, it was now clear, held

the balance of power, and whichever party won the support of its master-spirit was assured of victory.

It was with a pang of the keenest severity that Barton Seacrist recognized the fact just stated. Of all men he liked Abel Cummager the least, and therefore humored him the most. It was true political sagacity. Friends we have already; but enemies we must win. The men were rivals, and therefore enemies. But Barton Seacrist's dislike of Abel Cummager had a deeper root than a mere unconformity of interest. It was a strong and instinctive aversion resulting from a radical distrust of the man. He never could have been so gracious to him had his hate been less thoroughly sincere. And now this man had to be conciliated—won over by something more substantial than dinner party courtesies. It was, indeed, a bitter task; but Barton Seacrist was not one to shrink from any undertaking, merely because it was disagreeable.

It was a frightful collection of human beings that was gathered at Hardlot Hall, the acknowledged headquarters of the Mohicans. Low, heavy brows and evil visages were the prevailing type. The baser elements were out in all their strength. Each crawling vice, each lawless, Godless calling had there its representative. But all present were by no means low-browed villains and men whose outward looks betokened lives of brutal criminality. There were among the assembled hundreds countenances rich with strong and rare intelligence. There were bright, smooth faces there that women still

might love, and which, perhaps, women did love but too fondly. Youth had made its abundant contribution, and here and there was one whose glance or smile, or even frown, of softer tinge, gave deeper sadness to the vile mosaic. But in all that throng there was not one visage to be seen, however brave, or young, or fair, that did not show the blighting brand of some enslaving vice. Rags there were, too; and plenteous signs of low, and even wretched life—the mingled livery of drunkenness and crime—but not alone. Jewels flashed and super-fashionable garments sat jauntily on shapely forms, and tawdry splendor in a hundred ways made darker background of the squalid, vulgar mass in which it had its setting. It was a terrible array—a city's grand out-pouring of its worst and lowest elements—its rank and fierce democracy of viciousness and crime.

And yet it was a humorous mob. There were those, it was true, who, gathered into little knots, and, speaking in low, smothered voices, glared savagely and fearfully about them; but the great body laughed and joked and chattered, bandying oaths and chaff with loud and generous familiarity. There was earnestness, too, and here and there a cluster to itself was busy with some warm discussion. The one great topic, wherever argument was heard, seemed to be the coming election.

"It's my opinion," said a heavily-browed and whiskered man, whose very expression was a challenge of defiance, "that the man who's to head off old Seacrist hasn't been

discovered yet; and won't be neither."

"Who's that dares talk Tammany in this ere crowd?" angrily exclaimed a little red-faced man who came bustling and threateningly forward.

"It's me that said it, and dares say it agin, spite of any man who takes Tammany's money, and then goes and works agin Tammany's men."

"It's a lie," retorted the little man, shaking his fist menacingly at his larger and cooler adversary; but keeping himself, nevertheless, at a safely respectful distance.

"It's so, Tom Donnelly, and I can prove it. I'm not for Tammany agin Abel Cummager meself; but I don't take Tammany's money—that I don't."

"It's a lie—a lie—I tell ye, a lie!" roared the little man, fast approaching that point where discretion was likely to give way to temper.

"Into him, Tom!"

"I'll back ye, Mike. Three to one!"

"A ring! a ring! Stand back there, can't ye?"

"It's a fight! Fight! Fight!"

But all at once the uproar subsided. The scene was changed almost in an instant. Quarrels, disputations, laughter, whisperings stopped as by common consent, and all faces turned in one direction. The big man and the little one who had just been about to engage in fierce encounter, stood shoulder to shoulder, forgetful of past differences in their newly awakened interest. The grimy, fetid vagrant and the airy, perfumed fop leaned upon each other in their

eagerness to share the new sensation.

The cause of this sudden transformation was the appearance upon the scene of a new character—a large, heavily visaged man, who, entering by a small side door, walked slowly upon the platform that occupied a portion of one end of the hall. The new-comer needs no further description here, for he was Abel Cummager.

The greeting which this man received was as peculiar as the assemblage from which it came. The mingled howls, yells and screams with which a menagerie of wild animals might be expected to salute a favorite keeper, were here repeated in all their variations. To ordinary ears the horrible roar would have been full of terror; but upon the man who inspired it no other impression was made than that of silent pleasure. Without seeming to notice the din, he quietly seated himself upon the stage, and looked calmly out upon the boisterous throng before him. But something more responsive was demanded to satisfy the devotion of that assemblage. The uproar continued, and, if possible, became more and more demonstrative. At last the man who was the subject of the hideous ovation, arose, walked slowly to the front of the platform, bowed, and then again took his seat. But even this was not enough. Calls of "Cummager!" "Cummager!" amid whoops, screams and whistlings, continued with unabated fervor. Again slowly arising, the great leader took his stand be-

fore the audience, and waited for the clamor to subside.

When silence was restored, he proceeded to speak in a quick, unimpassioned tone—almost as a master might have addressed unruly scholars; but, with all his surface impassibility, there was a current of clever plausibleness and the deepest flattery running through his seemingly unstudied remarks which showed how profound was his knowledge of that phase of human nature with which he had to deal. He disclaimed all political ambition on his own account. He wanted no office, no emolument, no reward. All he had at heart as a member of the great Mohican society, was the proper protection of his "*friends*."

He had struck the master key. Once more the whole assembly was in a tumult, applauding as one man, and several minutes went by before silence was restored. It was an outburst of spontaneous and sincere enthusiasm that set the multitude to roaring—a genuine response to the speaker's words—for every man there had faith in what he had said. Every member of that hardened mob looked upon him not merely as a leader, but as a friend. One and all believed that he would be true to their class, whatever contingency might arise. Their faith in his fidelity as one of themselves was unbounded. Therein was his power, and he failed not to use it.

When order was once more restored, which was not until his audience had fairly exhausted its powers of expression, Cummager in the same

direct and quiet way proceeded to press home the advantage he had secured. A few words sufficed to present the claims of the rival parties between which they would have to choose—their merits from the Mohican standpoint being so skillfully measured and adjusted as to leave almost an exact balance between them. Having narrowed the proposition down to a point of almost absolute indifference, he submitted to his hearers the question of which they would support.

"You are our leader—we follow you," sang out a voice in the midst of the throng; and immediately there arose a shout and roar of approval that was absolutely irresistible. If opposition had existed, it would have been lost and drowned in that overpowering indorsement. No expression could have been more emphatic.

The point for which Abel Cummager had been laboring was secured. That element which was represented in the motley throng that had that night gathered in Hardlot Hall, was absolutely in his hands. His power over it was as perfect, and even stronger than it had ever been before.

Leaving to his subordinates the task of amusing the crowd, and carrying out certain arrangements for more thorough organization, Abel Cummager quietly passed from the hall to the street, where he found a carriage in waiting. In this he was quickly driven to the residence of Barton Seacrist.

No reception could have been more gracious than that which the all-powerful Mohican met at the hands

of the Tammany Sachem. Barton Seacrist's manner was courteous almost to servility. That of Abel Cummager was reserved, almost defiant. For some minutes the elder of the two men continued, in his peculiarly affable and condescending way, to talk upon indifferent points, scarcely eliciting a response, when, seeing that he was gaining no ground by that line of tactics, without introduction he turned the conversation to the business in hand. He it was that had solicited the interview.

"What do you think, Mr. Cummager, of the present state of the canvass?"

"That Tammany is in danger—of annihilation," was the cool and measured response.

"Hardly that bad, Mr. Cummager," replied Seacrist with a smile which it was easy enough to see was forced. "Hardly that bad, I think. I admit that a short time ago the outlook was indeed threatening. But things have greatly changed. The Reform movement has mostly exhausted itself. It was a thunder-storm—very alarming while it lasted; but it has blown over. The Progressionists are divided. The followers of Cinnamon Smooth cannot be turned against us. Indeed, I may safely say, the majority of them will vote with us, and the balance will throw their strength away. So, you see, Tammany, although in a minority, taking the whole vote, is quite safe——"

"Unless——"

"Unless what, Mr. Cummager?"

"The Mohicans join the Reformers."

"But that—that can hardly be. It would be a most unnatural alliance."

"Stranger things have happened—stranger things have happened."

"Well! well!" resumed Seacrist, with his accustomed smile—his cheek having momentarily blanched at the possibility his companion had suggested—"that brings me to the point I wished to confer with you about. Why cannot Tammany and the Mohicans be brought to a friendly understanding? Both belong to the same great party. Both, I am confident, have in the main no other object than the public good. Can you, Mr. Cummager, assign any sufficient reason why they should not co-operate?"

"None whatever."

"I am rejoiced to hear you say so. The division that has existed between the societies has to me long been a source of much sorrow. I am, for one, willing to make great sacrifices to heal it. What, Mr. Cummager, do you ask as a condition to such agreement in behalf of your organization?"

"In behalf of my organization—nothing," replied Cummager with an emphasis that was startling. "I am ready to pledge Tammany the support of the Mohicans—I am even ready to disband my organization that Tammany may have no rival in the party, without asking any political equivalent whatever. What I do ask may appear so slight a matter that you may be surprised when I mention it."

The puzzled expression on Seacrist's countenance showed that for once he was completely at a loss.

Cummager went on with quiet deliberation :

"You are, doubtless, aware that I have had some domestic trouble."

"I have much regretted to hear it," Seacrist replied.

"Mrs. Cummager and myself not being compatible in our dispositions, I was compelled to institute proceedings for divorce. A decree has just been entered in my favor."

"Let me congratulate you."

"Having of late, by your invitation, enjoyed much of the society of your daughter, you can scarcely have failed to observe the intimacy that——"

"What!" exclaimed Barton Seacrist, springing to his feet and glaring upon his companion with undisguised astonishment and indignation, "do you ask the hand of my daughter?—you, Abel Cummager—you, who are——"

"The head of the Society of the Mohicans, and at the present time master of the political situation. Precisely so, Mr. Seacrist. You have stated the condition upon which the political consolidation you so much desire is possible—upon the acceptance or rejection of which depends your party's triumph—or annihilation."

Never was there a more expressive tableau than at that moment. Seacrist stood erect, tall, pale, and with eyes flashing the hate that had all along been in his soul. Cummager sat perfectly undisturbed, with a composure in his countenance which could alone have been the product of long years of practice at the gaming table. The cat with his paw upon

the mouse, could not have shown a mere absolute consciousness of superiority than he did.

But the cat, however cruelly playful his disposition, was not disposed to give the mouse much indulgence. He pressed the subject.

"I see you are somewhat surprised, Mr. Seacrist; but you cannot be insensible to the advantages I offer you, both politically and socially. There are plenty of families in New York that would be proud of an alliance with Abel Cummager—families that were established long before yours, Mr. Seacrist, was heard of."

Barton Seacrist winced anew under this last thrust, but he was not one to be long off his guard. With an effort recovering something of his accustomed suavity of manner, he inquired of his companion whether he had introduced the subject under discussion to Kate. He was well aware that Cummager had not done so; but he wished to avoid the necessity of committing himself either way at the time.

"Certainly not," replied Cummager. "My regard for parental authority would not permit."

There was a trace of sarcasm in his voice, and a faint smile upon his features, as the wily Mohican indulged this bit of morality.

"Then I must confer with my daughter before giving you an answer," was Seacrist's reply.

"Properly so," responded Cummager, a slight frown spreading over his countenance; "but you will remember that the election is near at hand. When shall I look for a definite answer?"

"To-morrow."

And the men separated, Seacrist rising and politely bowing his visitor from the room; but his eyes following him with a look of intense, though puzzled, malignity. Then, once more alone, the old man sank down in his chair, and it seemed as if the interview had added a dozen years to his age. All his stateliness and energy were gone. His thin, bloodless hands nervously clutched the arms of his chair, and his head settled slowly and feebly upon his breast.

He was sitting thus when the door opened, and in softly entered Kate. Catching the expression of her father's face, she instantly sprang to his side and exclaimed:

"Oh, father! father! something has happened. I know there has. What is it?"

Barton Seacrist made no reply.

"You have had Abel Cummager with you," Kate went on. "Do you know that I have always had a dread of that man? Something has made me hate him."

Barton Seacrist insensibly groaned as he heard these words. Kate had sunk on her knees at his feet—a favorite position when they were alone—her hands clasping his, and her eyes looking up earnestly and affectionately into his face. Any one seeing them at that moment could not have helped noticing a strange resemblance, not merely in feature and facial outline, but in the weariness and hopelessness that was in their looks. Equally apparent was the affection that existed between them. That affection was not to be pat

off with silence; and so Barton Seacrist told Kate the whole story of his interview with Abel Cumma-ger.

"And is there no hope of political success except by yielding to the terms of this—this man?" she asked at its conclusion.

"I am afraid not," was her father's reply.

"Then I must be his wife."

There was not a change of feature; not a variation in the tone of her voice; not a quiver of the lip nor of the eye, as Kate announced her resolution.

Her father looked at her momentarily in silence; then, throwing his arms about her and pressing her to him, he passionately exclaimed:

"No, no, no, Kate! that must not be. It is too much to ask—too great a sacrifice. We can give up Tammany. We can give up politics. We will still have each other. All that we have been laboring for must now be abandoned."

"No, father, no!" replied Kate with the same absolute composure, "It must not be abandoned. The sacrifice I have already made for our success is greater than that now demanded. This is but another drop in the cup."

And so it was settled.

To Mademoiselle Cathron's tender of services that night Kate returned an emphatic negative.

"But come to me in the morning," she added, "I shall need your assistance then."

CHAPTER XIII.

THE ELECTION.

THE night before election is one on which no politician rests. The night before the battle in which thousands are to lay down their lives, in the feverish anxiety of its dread anticipation, is as nothing to it. The soldier can sleep, and sleep peacefully, although he knows that with the morrow comes the horrid blast of war; the shot and shell; the furious charge; the wounding and the death. But who ever heard of a politician sleeping on the eve of the day that was to decide the all-important question whether he or some other man was to hold office? Riggletoe aspires to be high-constable of the town of Red Jacket—perquisites five hundred dollars or less—but Riggletoe would regard himself as certain of defeat, and deservedly so, should he close his eyes the night before the awful day. There is always so much to be done at that time. There are so many people to see, who might go wrong if they were not seen just then. There are tickets and handbills and documents of a dozen sorts to be distributed, that must be on hand at the precise minute. There are canvassers and challengers and ticket-peddlers—altogether a most complicated machinery—to be set in motion. And then there is the enemy to watch, and oh, what a task that is! No candidate ever had a strictly honest or honorable competitor. And,

finally, the amount of talking that must be done by way of preliminary—the giving of directions, the hearing of reports, the comparing of notes, the discussing of probabilities, the enunciation of opinions which the next twenty-four hours will shatter or confirm—is something wonderful. It is astonishing what labor is involved in securing to a free people the privilege of selecting their own officials in a perfectly fair and unbiased manner.

Clinton Maintland was no exception to the rule which makes watchers of candidates on the night before election. Impelled by a feeling of unaccountable restlessness, at a late hour he went round to his party head-quarters. He found a great many people there—a great deal of loud and excited talking—a great deal of running to and fro—and, necessarily, a great deal of uproar and confusion. He wanted to make himself useful, and diligently looked about for something to employ himself at; but although others were so intensely busy, and there was, necessarily, much to do, he found it quite impossible to get satisfactorily to work, or even to comprehend what was demanded. If he attempted anything, it was only to find himself in somebody else's way, and in the end to make matters a great deal worse than they were.

Not so with Tom Sponge. He always found something to do, and was always on hand at precisely the right time to do it. The amount of labor he performed that night was almost incredible. Clinton looked at him in silent wonder and admira-

tion, as he flew hither and thither, giving an order at this point, dispatching a commission at that, and keeping everything and everybody in motion about him. And no one could have looked at Tom except in wonder and admiration. His outfit was simply gorgeous. His neck-tie had never before been so full nor so brilliant, and, as he dashed here and there with the long pendants streaming over his shoulders, he decidedly created the impression of an imprisoned, but very lively, comet.

Finding that he was of no possible use where he was, Clinton made his way into the street, and walked aimlessly about until he was weary, and then went to his room and to bed—but not to sleep. The curse of politics, with its penalty of unrest, was upon him. His head was in a whirl, and he found it impossible to keep his body still. His mind was busy with the probabilities and possibilities of the morrow; and he fell to deliberating, not without some natural longings and aspirations, intermingled with apprehensions of defeat, upon the career which victory might open up before him. And then his thoughts took a turn. His mind went backward, and one after another the leading incidents of his life arose before him. He reviewed the campaign through which he had just passed. He re-read his father's letter criticising his political course. He thought of Kate Seacrist, and, not without some inward twitches and burnings, recalled the brief and feverish dream of his soul under the spell of her fascination. He revisited the humble bake-shop, where

he was wont to go in the days of his struggle and poverty, and once more looked upon the chaste and sadly beautiful features of poor Alice Plain with her delicate babe upon her arm. He laughed as he recalled the ludicrous figure of Tom Sponge, in threadbare garments, announcing himself a wreck, but a gentleman. Then he was back in Willowford, and all the stirring scenes and aspirations of his boyhood were before him. He heard his father solemnly declare his oft-repeated series of political opinions, and listened to the quaint, but clever, sayings of his uncle, Martin Swartwout. And then, as his thoughts went over that portion of his life, he found himself sitting, at the close of a summer's day, upon a low stone wall, out beneath the shadow of grand old trees, and by his side was Margaret Kortright—little Margaret—and his arm stole round her waist as he told her of his plans for coming years, and his lips sought hers in boyish sympathy and consolation; and he remembered how, when she had fled half-frightened by his bold advances, he had vowed to himself that he loved her then, and that he would love her always. And, from this point his thoughts again turning future-ward, he recalled his subsequent meetings with Margaret; how she had burst upon him a vision of amazing beauty; how a barrier had mysteriously sprung up between them; and how, as his life had failed to run in accord with hers, had been its only wide departure from the dreams which his youth had so fondly che-

rished. So absorbing became his speculations upon the causes and the probabilities of this unaccountable divergence, that day surprised him in the midst of his meditations—some of which he found were becoming strangely depressing—and he sprang from his bed to drive the subject from his mind.

How was it with the other leading actors in our story? Barton Seacrist was busy, as usual. All night long he sat in a quiet room, vigilant and alert. There was no excitement, no confusion where he was. Men came and went without noise or demonstration. Grulls, Skipp, Hargate, Windsham, Browbeat, Scourge, of the *Sunday Plague*, Cinnamon Smooth, all spent a little time with him and disappeared. He had never been more calm and seemingly confident, presenting a most notable contrast to the politicians who were elsewhere almost fretting their lives away.

Kate was not far off. She, too, was quietly and actively employed. She was not pale, for Mademoiselle Cathron's ministrations had not been rejected; but her eyes had a hungry and wasted look, even more painful than they had ever shown before. Article after article did she prepare for the morning papers—appeals to political friends, excoriations of political enemies, directions for harmonious and efficient political action; and, when these were finished, there were a number of little notes in her father's hand writing—only a few words each—which she was engaged in elaborating and putting into ac-

ceptable form, until the clear, strong light of day was streaming into her room.

As for Gordon Searist, he was as busy as the rest. Early in the evening he called at the Bafford residence. Margaret was still too ill to see him ; but he sent her an affectionate message ; and then remained the better part of an hour with Clara, to whom he detailed the latest intelligence of the campaign. But, of course, time was precious, and he hurried away to his party headquarters, where he asked a number of questions, relieved himself of sundry valuable predictions, and contracted several wagers of considerable amount on the majority which he was the next day to receive. Thence he went the round of the principal saloons of his acquaintance, playing a few billiards and spending considerable money just to gratify people who had votes ; and then, having fallen in with Bill Travers and a few other choice spirits, he made his way in their company to Abel Cummauer's, where the next morning found him.

There was a strange quietness pervading the great city on the morning of the election. There was not the same opening up of broad, glittering fronts on the main avenues ; not the usual rush to business, nor the constant roll of wheels, and the endless patter of hurrying feet. The few pedestrians that were early abroad glided suspiciously along, or, stopping to exchange quick, significant words in low voices, speedily vanished away. Occasionally there was a sharp clatter of hoofs and wheels, as a carriage went rattling by, bear-

ing either a belated party leader or a messenger with important dispatches to some distant post, and then all again was the quiet of expectancy.

But while the body of the city was thus undemonstrative, there were localities where its vital force had broken out with even more than its accustomed intensity. Around the different polling-places were congregated small, but rapidly growing clusters of deeply interested men, many of whose members, holding bundles of paper slips in their hands, and gesticulating violently, were evidently bent upon the work of electioneering. More and more grew and spread these assemblages until they flowed around the nearest street corners, and the various canvassing agents, instead of having each a man or two by the button-hole, became the centres of excited throngs from which issued not infrequently the voices of partisans in warm and angry disputation. Other sounds, too, began to be heard. Cheers arose upon the air as candidates appeared upon the scene, and strains of music came at first faintly, and then clashingly, as processions began to move up and down the streets with banners and other devices appealing to the people for party favorites. Then windows that had before been dark, blossomed out with rosy faces ; the sidewalks became alive with shouting boys ; men went hurrying to and fro ; and the great city was at last awake to the consciousness of the most exciting day in all the year—that of a popular election.

The People's Anti-Tammany and

Universal Reform Party, depending mainly upon the solid reason of the people, and having but little money to expend in electioneering agencies, had fewer devices to attract public attention than its older and richer adversary. Still it was not unrepresented. Among the instrumentalities it had employed to advertise its existence and its purposes, was an immense wagon drawn by half a dozen powerful horses, on which was stationed a band of music, and around which was a broad canvas displaying such inscriptions as, "Honesty vs. Tammany—the People are the Jury;" "The many should rule—not the few;" "Down with the Ring," and the like; while over all, on an elevated platform, was a man in Continental attire, bearing aloft a flag upon whose folds were the words, "Reform and Victory." For this most ingenious contrivance—the stump speech on wheels—the People's Anti-Tammany and Universal Reform Party was indebted to the genius of Tom Sponge, who not only superintended its preparation, but saw it set out upon its mission of public enlightenment with emotions of no little pride and satisfaction.

The first reports brought to the People's Anti-Tammany and Universal Reform headquarters were of the most cheering character. The supporters of the new movement were turning out in unexpected strength. Many men were voting its ticket, who had not voted before for years. The truth was, that the better portion of the community, which was uninfluenced by popular demonstra-

tions, had become so distrustful of Tammany as to be ready to join any movement against it. It was this element which had been almost lost sight of by politicians on both sides, that was suddenly showing its strength. Sponge who, as chairman of the new party's chief committee, in his grandest outfit, was early at his post—in fact he had not left it except to bestow some attention on his wardrobe and snatch a bite of breakfast—was almost in ecstasies. He fairly danced with joy as report after report of the same uniformly favorable character continued to arrive. Higher and higher rose his spirits, until a piece of intelligence was whispered in his ear that at first took away his breath, then caused him to turn almost as white as the spotless linen he was wearing, and then seize his hat and rush madly from the room.

The same information which brought such joy to the bosoms of Sponge and his co-workers, carried equal consternation to the camp of the enemy. The Tammany headquarters was in confusion. But when Skipp, and Grulls, and Windsham, and a score of other leaders sought Barton Seacrist, they found him perfectly undisturbed and confident. Nevertheless, no sooner were they out of his presence, than he greeted Abel Cummager, who quietly entered, with a look of undisguised anxiety. Earnest, although brief, was the conversation that ensued between the great leaders.

"There is nothing to be lost by that course," said Seacrist, after the two had conversed for a time, "and

everything to be gained. It is ruin to fail at all ; while, if we succeed, success makes all right. The venture must be made."

"As you say," was the laconic reply.

The result of the interview was that the Mohicans were soon at work.

The developments that followed will account for Sponge's agitation ; but why he should have so hurriedly left the room, and gone racing down the street, will require a word or two of explanation.

Violence on election day had nothing about it very extraordinary. That it should, in such an emergency as had then arisen, be resorted to by the opposition, was nothing more than Sponge, with his previous experience in New York politics, had suspected. Indeed, he had meditated a proposition for doing the same thing, and had only abandoned the idea because of pecuniary inability to carry it out. Nevertheless some provision had been made for the contingency that had now arisen.

The Waterbrashes were a fire company of clearly established reputation. Their battles—not against the elements only—were matter of universal notoriety. Generally, they had been in the employ of the other side ; but, on this occasion, by some unaccountable oversight, they had been neglected by Tammany. Naturally indignant by reason of such unhandsome treatment, they had been quite ready to negotiate with Sponge's party, and the result was a highly satisfactory arrangement for their services—purely with a view to

defensive operations. It was to put himself in communication with these champions of an honest ballot, that Sponge started in such haste when apprised that Tammany's new allies were taking forcible possession of the polls.

But if Sponge's wrath had been great by reason of the startling intelligence he had received of the enemy's operations, it was as nothing to the indignation that was excited in his bosom by a spectacle that, as he speeded along the street, suddenly burst upon his vision. The sight that was so harrowing, was that of his car, which he had sent forth with so much satisfaction, in the hands of the Philistines. The Gordon Seacrist Association, in obedience to the mysteriously communicated command that brought all such organizations into the field, in moving to the point where its services were required, had accidentally encountered Sponge's wagon peacefully proceeding in the midst of a crowd of admiring boys and children, on its mission of reform. To take possession of it was the work of an instant. The Anti-Tammany inscriptions were unceremoniously torn off ; the musicians were tumbled from their seats, and the banner of "Reform and Victory," being brought down from its rightful elevation, was fastened to the wagon's tail, that it might drag in the dust ; while a brawny butcher-boy, mounting to the late standard-bearer's place, displayed the flag of the Gordon Seacrist Association—that with the inscription of "*Vox populi vox dei*," and which Margaret Kortright was

to have presented. At the same time, seizing the captured instruments of the routed musicians, an equal number of the victors mounted to their places, and making up in power what they lacked in skill, began to blow with all their might. Thus completely victorious, and with the captured chariot in their midst, the Association was moving uproariously forward as Sponge, in attempting to cross the street, found himself cut off by their procession.

Luckily he was not recognized, and, disentangling himself as speedily as possible, he hurried on to the quarters of the Waterbrashes. These he found just setting out to a fire that was not far off; but a very little persuasion induced them to change their route, and, leaving the fiery elements to their own course for a time, they started, engine and all, in pursuit of the exultant Associationists.

Before they could come up to them, the enemy had reached the first voting-place on their line of march, and there, having brushed away the assembled citizens who were peacefully exercising a free-man's privilege, they had taken possession of the poll, and, notwithstanding they had once on that day already performed that duty, were a second time busy passing in their ballots. So intent were they upon the work in which they were engaged, that the Waterbrashes had time to approach, make a connection with a convenient hydrant, and open fire—or rather, water—before their presence was even suspected. The first to fall was the butcher boy with the

flag, who, while performing a jig upon his lofty platform, being overwhelmed by an unexpected deluge, tumbled headlong with his banner to the dust; and, at the same time, several streams of cold water descended among the patriots crowding round the open polling window, through which one of the currents entering, swept the persons and faces of the election judges, producing indescribable dampness and consternation within.

Completely taken by surprise, the Associationists were necessarily under the greatest disadvantage. Fire they might have withstood; but water was an element to which they were totally unused. Hence it is no wonder that they soon fell back in great confusion. Still they were not the men to yield without a struggle. Gathering stones, and such other missiles as they could lay hands on, they opened a scattering fusillade; but, one after another, with ceaseless streams of dirty water squirting in their faces, they were put *hors de combat*. On moved the resistless Waterbrashes, led by half a score of brawny nozzlemen, and in a very few minutes the Gordon Seacrist Association was washed from the field, its banner was captured, Sponge's car was recovered, and a brilliant victory for reform and honest voting was achieved.

What might have been the effect upon the political fortunes of the day, had the victorious Waterbrashes pursued their conquering career, it is now quite impossible to tell. Unfortunately, in the very moment of their victory they were deprived

of a directing head. Sponge, carried away by enthusiasm as he saw how the tide of battle was flowing, incautiously ventured so far in advance of his own forces that a couple of the enemy, seeing his exposed condition, suddenly seized upon him and began to drag him away. But Tom was not the man to yield without a battle. He resisted, and resisted desperately. He cried aloud, too, and doubtless would have been discovered and rescued, had not a nozzle-man, ignorant of his identity, at that moment turned his battery upon the struggling group. Anything like recognition was then impossible. In the mud, and in the midst of a blinding storm of water and clay, rolled and tumbled the three men, sometimes Tom on top, and sometimes his adversaries. It was all in vain he fought. Compelled to succumb at last to superior force, Tom was dragged away in triumph; and oh, what a figure he presented! His clothes were in rags, and every part of his person was drenched and crusted with mire.

Being carried round a corner, to a point where the storm of mud and water could not reach them, Tom found himself surrounded by his enemies, who immediately proceeded to sit in court martial on his case. They had already decided "to put a head on him," and were about to carry that mysterious sentence into execution, when relief came in an unexpected form.

The police, who had been out of sight during all the trouble, at this point came charging up, and Tom's captors took to their heels, leaving

him a second time to become a prisoner—this time in the hands of the officers of the law, who marched him off as a rioter to the lock-up, and there kept him until the day was over—and lost.

Nor was Tom the only sufferer. The leading Waterbrashes were, likewise, arrested upon the charge of interference with the election—although none of the members of the Gordon Seacrist Association were ever brought to account—and their organization, on account of their share in that day's proceedings, was formally condemned and dissolved.

But it was not only at one point where there had been disturbance. All over the city men of brutal bearing appeared at the polls, and, meeting with no effectual resistance from the police, proceeded to overawe the peaceable citizens who were exercising their lawful rights. A panic ensued. Respectable men fled before the mob, and, the polls at many points falling into the hands of rioters, and there being but one company of Waterbrashes, Tammany carried the day by an overwhelming vote.

All this, of course, gave rise to a vast deal of talk and scandal. An indignation meeting of the abused and disappointed ones was held; and on the same night there was a dinner-party at Barton Seacrist's, at which were Scourge, of the *Sunday Plague*, and Senator Bloom, and Browbeat and Striker, and a great many other enthusiastic individuals, and at which Windsham was unusually happy in his remarks, rejoicing over the great and glorious victory. The

election, however, was over, and before a week had gone round, the public thought and cared no more about it than if it had been an affair of the preceding century.

But Tammany's triumph was not universal.

Clinton Maintland, disgusted at the scenes of lawlessness and violence he had witnessed, and, concluding that all was lost, had gone to his room; and, being weary and sore with labor and watching, had early retired to his couch. He had barely got to sleep, however, when he was awakened by an unprecedented uproar. Springing from his bed under the impression that the house was on fire, he threw open the door of his room, when in rushed Tom Sponge, who, catching Clinton in his arms, began to drag him about the room, all in his night garments as he was, dancing and capering like one possessed.

"It's all right!—all right!" exclaimed that erratic individual, when Clinton had at last prevailed upon him to offer some explanation of his conduct.

"What is all right—the People's Anti-Tammany and Universal Reform Party?" asked Clinton.

"Oh, no," said Tom, with the slightest trace of disappointment in his tone. "Not that; for it is dead. But who cares, since you are elected?" And Tom, once more catching Clinton in his arms, went off in another dance about the room.

It was even so. Clinton was elected—and by just Five Hundred Majority.

The Gordon Seacrist Association,

to which had been assigned the duty of taking care of its patron's interests in the district in which he was a candidate, had been so thoroughly demoralized by its defeat at the hands of the Waterbrashes as to be totally unequal to the task. In fact it was for that day no more seen nor heard of. Hence the result above indicated.

CHAPTER XIV.

ANOTHER PHOTOGRAPH.

In dealing with the fortunes of politics and politicians, the writer has for a time quite lost sight of one of the parties to his story, of whom, he is confident, the reader would willingly know more. The case of Alice Plain, as will be recollected, had been confided to the hands of the gentlemanly wreck and vagabond, Tom Sponge; and however unsuitable they might appear for such a charge, it could not have been given to more willing ones. Being but flesh and blood, it is not at all strange that Tom had come to take a deeper interest in his client even than strict professional duty required.

The case was one that occasioned him a great deal of embarrassment. His duty was to find the lady's husband, and take such steps as would bring him back to his wife; but that, as may readily be surmised, was the very thing which Tom at heart did not desire to have done. In the most delicate manner conceivable he had suggested to his client that she was entitled to a divorce; but the

information entirely failed to produce the desired effect. Alice had abandoned home and friends for the man she called "husband," and her love was not of the kind to be dismissed at will. Tom's heart quite sank within him as he discovered how true hers was to its lawful lord.

His duty was clear, and, finding that the attainment of his inclination was out of the question, he bravely made up his mind—not without a struggle—to do it. The case, however, was full of difficulties. Alice herself could render very little assistance. She had only known her husband a short time before their marriage; he had previously told her nothing of his antecedents, and had subsequently given her very little information concerning his business, his haunts, or his friends. It was even probable that he had concealed his true name. The only evidence she possessed of being a wife was her marriage certificate, which, thanks to Tom's ingenuity, was safe from destruction.

The first step, Tom's sagacity told him, was to find the clergyman who had performed the ceremony, and ascertain what he knew about the matter. It might be all important to prove by him the identity of the husband, were he, on being discovered, to deny his share in the business, as was likely to be the case. But here a difficulty arose. On visiting the place where he had lived, as Tom and Alice did together, it was ascertained that the clergyman had gone away, and the report was that he was dead, thus fulfilling Gordon Seacrist's boast. "What did he die

of?" One answered small-pox, another fever, and a third apoplexy. "He's not dead at all," said Tom, and so it proved; for, on going to the place to which he had removed, he was found alive and well.

But here there was another trouble. Alice had eloped with her husband, and had been hastily married by a total stranger. The man recognized his own certificate; but doubted whether he should again know the parties, were he to see them. "Oh, yes, you would," said Tom, "and I will prove it."

"Where was the ceremony performed?" he asked.

"In the church," was the clergyman's reply.

"Then place yourself at the altar, and the same parties will again appear before you."

With the foolish fondness usual to her sex in such matters, Alice had, through all her destitution, retained the dress, although but a plain travelling suit, in which she had been married. By Tom's direction on this occasion she had taken it with her. Arrayed once more in her simple wedding robe—it was with a sinking heart she put it on—and Tom in his most stunning suit, almost as much depressed because it was not to a real ceremony he was going—the two, entering the church, walked slowly down the aisle, as any loving couple meditating matrimony might have done. The minister, totally uninformed as to who they were—for Tom had not even disclosed his identity—awaited their approach. Closely did he scan their features as they stood before him.

At last he gravely shook his head.

"This is the lady I married," he remarked. "But you, sir," addressing Tom, "are not the man. The one to whom I united this woman was a younger and much handsomer person. The whole transaction is now clear before me."

Tom at first colored fearfully at this uncomplimentary allusion to his looks; for his personal appearance was his greatest weakness. But even this feeling soon gave way to exultation at the success of his ruse.

"Then you would know the parties were they again to appear before you under the same circumstances?"

"I certainly should."

The first point had been made; but still the greatest perplexity remained, which was to find the man.

Had he ever given his wife any photograph or other likeness of himself?

No, never, although she had often asked him for one.

"Which doesn't prove that he never had one taken for somebody else—for his mother, his sister, or his aunt," Tom hastily added, as he saw the look of pain his first words occasioned.

Then began a search through the photograph establishments of New York. Day after day did the two walk up and down the streets, visiting gallery after gallery, in the hope that something might be found that would serve as a clue to the missing man, Alice necessarily having to go along, as her recollection was the one to be consulted.

These walks were all well enough

in a business way; but to Tom they meant a great deal more. He really did not wish to find the one of whom they were in pursuit. Nothing would have satisfied him so well as to learn that he was dead and buried. But they gave him what was inexpressibly delightful—Alice's companionship. Since her restoration to health he had not enjoyed near as much of her society as he desired; nor could he do so without a disregard of delicacy of which he would not be guilty for any consideration. She was another man's wife; and, although widowed by a husband's disloyalty, still true to her own obligation and to his memory. Tom felt that under such circumstances he could not intrude without becoming apology; and these long rambles gave him the very opportunity he longed for. Although constantly apprehensive, while in her company, lest some discovery would be made that would take her away altogether from himself, he experienced a real sense of enjoyment; and when wearied with over-exertion—for she was not yet strong—she would lean confidently upon him for support, he was more than happy.

Thus did day after day, with their accustomed walks and searches, go by, without bringing anything that was even suggestive to light, and Tom was growing less and less nervous for the result, but more and more fatally entangled by his speechless passion. Then came the political canvass in which he had figured so conspicuously, and which for a time put a stop to the rambles he enjoyed so much; for Tom was one of

those impulsive creatures, who, giving their whole soul and might to what they undertake, can do only one thing at a time. But the election over, he returned like a hungry man to the old repast, and the long walks and the visits to the galleries were resumed—not, however, until he had once more delicately suggested the feasibility of a divorce, and had been met with a response no more encouraging than before.

In one of their accustomed strolls the husband-hunters had entered a fashionable photographic establishment, and were leisurely looking about them, when the attendant in charge, ambitious to exhibit the claims of the shop, held up before Alice a very richly mounted and jewelled locket, and began to expatiate upon its costly and exquisite workmanship.

"Nice, izzn't it? An engagement present—young man going to be married soon—to a great heiress—altogether an upper-crust affair—right good looking, too, izzn't he?"

And with that the exhibitor, whose tongue had thus been running on, touched a spring and held up the miniature disclosed to the eyes of the visitor.

Alice gave one glance at the countenance before her, and uttered a scream. She was looking on the features of her own husband.

Tom, who had been glancing over some pictures in another part of the room, rushed to the spot, and snatching the costly gem from the hand of the astonished shopman, fixed his eye upon the likeness exposed. He was almost as much startled as his

companion upon recognizing the features of Gordon Seacrist, with which he had become quite familiar during the political campaign just over. However, quickly regaining his presence of mind, he invented a plausible story about the resemblance between the face in the locket and that of some valued friend—for Tom was not above a slight deviation from the truth in an emergency—and so managed to elicit from the merchant all the particulars which confidential gossip gave of Gordon's matrimonial enterprise, including the name, residence, connections and supposed pecuniary attractions of the lady, who, as the reader knows, was Margaret Kortright.

Then hurrying away his companion, who was beginning to exhibit signs of hysterical agitation, and confiding her to the charge of good Mrs. Barrett, Tom lost no time in seeking Clinton Maintland, and communicating to him in full the astounding discovery he had made.

CHAPTER XV.

AFTER THE ELECTION.

THE result of the political battle that has been described, was that Tammany was stronger than ever. As for the People's Anti-Tammany and Universal Reform party, it was never heard of more. But the triumph of the victor was by no means unalloyed. The election of Clinton Maintland was a most serious drawback. To Barton Seacrist it was occasion not merely of vexation, but

of alarm. He saw in it the most imminent peril to all the schemes for which he had been laboring, and which the victory of his party otherwise had secured. He was aware that Clinton understood all his plans and aims, and with him in the legislative body, to which he looked for their realization, it was scarcely possible that they could be carried into effect. He knew, too, that there was no longer a hope of bringing Clinton over to his interest. Kate had failed to accomplish it before the election; and now even Kate's influence, by reason of her engagement to Abel Cummager whose co-operation had become essential, was out of the question. What was to be done? Of one thing Barton Seacrist felt assured. Clinton Maintland must be prevented from taking his seat in the body to which he had been chosen—at least until such time as the designs of the great Tammamby leader should be consummated.

Not that Barton Seacrist gave expression to any such feeling by either word or look. No man could have, apparently, been so well satisfied with the result. His countenance wore a smile of perfect tranquillity; and, in referring to Clinton, his language was invariably full of respect and kindness.

As for Gordon Seacrist, his chagrin was excessive. Margaret Kortright was still too ill to listen to his explanations; but to Clara Bafford, who fully sympathized with him in his trial, he poured out the whole story of the wrongs to which he had been made a victim. But he did not content himself merely with

complaints. By the advice of political friends he had notice duly served upon Clinton of his purpose to contest the election—the ground of action being the proceedings of the Waterbrashes, who were alleged to have acted immediately under the direction of Clinton, through his agent, Tom Sponge, in driving Gordon's honest and legal supporters from the polls. The whole community was soon talking of the great case of Seacrist vs. Maintland.

But Gordon had other causes of vexation. By the untimely illness of Margaret Kortright, he had been deprived of certain material assistance he had confidently relied upon securing through his marriage; his luck at Abel Cummager's had been unusually bad; his father, the election being over, and all danger from hurtful revelations consequently past, was not disposed to be remarkably liberal; and more irritating than all else, Bill Travers and other boon companions, who had been dissipating upon his bounty, began to treat him with actual indifference on account of his embarrassment. He had but one unfailing consolation, and that was the society of Clara Bafford, who was devoted through every adversity. He, consequently, gave more and more of his time to her company.

As for Clinton Maintland, he suddenly found himself a lion of the very first magnitude. By many he was hailed as "the coming man," and testimonials of the most extravagant description began to pour in upon him. The public journals took up his "position" on several leading

questions, and discussed it with much earnestness ; but, as usual, arrived at totally different conclusions—all being equally wide of the mark ; for on the majority of public questions he had no position. The pictorial newspapers gave portraits of him, each after a likeness by some distinguished artist, and vouched for as the only correct one, but which would generally have answered as well for almost any other man. Half a dozen biographical sketches were published, all highly complimentary, but respectively assigning him an ancestry that was Scotch, Dutch, English, French, Italian and Irish. Finally the enthusiasm his success inspired culminated in the tender of a public dinner—the very flattering invitation being signed by many of the sort that have “axes to grind”—and which the writer is sorrowfully compelled to acknowledge that his hero accepted. The truth is, that Clinton’s head was partially turned by his rare good fortune. He really began to believe that he enjoyed a popularity which was the result of some merit that the public had discovered sooner than its possessor had. He failed to consider upon what slightest of accidents mere success often depends ; but then he was young and inexperienced—and human.

The dinner was a great success ; but the writer declines making a record of its utterances for three reasons. First, because the declarations of such gatherings are always substantially the same ; second, because the testimony which all ovations of that description furnish is, that the best man is invariably the

successful man ; and third, because a faithful report of all that was said and done on the occasion, in connection with what remains to be recorded of the treatment Clinton was soon to experience at the hands of some of his then most ardent admirers, would be an exhibit little creditable to our common human nature. Further, concerning the affair, it is enough to say that Tom Sponge was present in his most elaborate make-up, and that he enjoyed it immensely.

But Clinton’s dreams were not without their shadow. He could not banish memory ; and, in the midst of his triumphs, especially when a suspicion of the insincerity of those who were lavishing their flatteries upon him would steal into his thoughts, his recollection would go back to the time when, as a boy, he had promised himself the chief enjoyment of man’s success in sharing it with another. He would then sadly miss the help of a true and pure heart’s companionship, such as his imagination had portrayed, but which his experience had totally failed to discover. His banished passion for Kate Seacrist, like an unwholesome stimulant, had only made his soul’s thirst the greater. At such moments he could not help saying to himself, “Oh, that Margaret had been the one !”

Then he would reproach himself for his weakness, and pride would come to his aid. Had not Margaret treated him with an unkindness that amounted to positive discourtesy—the rich and haughty beauty ? he would ask himself. Nay, more ; was she not the affianced bride of his

rival and his enemy—a man for whom he felt the utmost contempt on account of his acknowledged unworthiness—choosing to bestow on him the love of which he would only have been too proud. Sternly would he arm his heart against her, and then—and then the battle would be sharper than before.

Clinton in time undoubtedly would have conquered the fancy that was vexing him, supplanting it, most probably, with another that had a more substantial foundation, had matters gone on as they were. But just then came the startling disclosure which Tom Sponge had brought to light. Even Clinton was surprised to find how he was affected by it. His pride was gone in an instant. He forgot the discourtesy by which he had been aggrieved. The woman in whom he was interested—his boyhood's companion—was about to be made the victim of another's villainy—the innocent participant in a crime against the law of the land. It was no longer a vague and general sentiment, half love and half misanthropy, that inclined him to action; but a strong sense of duty. He felt that he would not be a true man if he did not interfere.

But how was he to interfere? The woman in whose behalf he was called upon to act had, by her own decision, built up a wall between them which his pride would not permit him to scale. She had in the most effectual manner interdicted all communication. He thought of an anonymous statement of the facts he had learned, but immediately rejected the suggestion as unmanly and unworthy, be-

sides most probably ineffectual. In his dilemma he finally concluded to consult Tom Sponge, of whose ingenuity he was beginning to entertain a by no means indifferent opinion. Accordingly Tom was taken into his confidence; but with a result of which he had no anticipation. The effect was at once to open up the fountain of his employee's hidden sorrow, with a full revelation of his love for a woman who was not only another man's wife, but was resolved to remain such in spite of all his attractions and persuasions. Most lugubriously did he present the hardship of both his own case and that of his companion.

"It's marvellous," he declared, "what luck some men have in such matters. Here's a man who has not only married the woman I want, but is going to marry the woman you want. Now, I say, that's not fair."

"It's hardly equitable, I admit," replied Clinton, laughing in spite of the gravity of the subject. "But now the question is, what are we to do to circumvent this man?"

"I have it," said Tom, leaping to his feet, "the very thing. I'll meet him, quarrel with him, insult him, shoot him, kill him, trample on him;" and Tom went through the operations he described, handling the imaginary pistol and dancing up and down as energetically and vindictively as if he had the offensive individual before him and under him at that very moment.

"No, no," replied Clinton, who saw that Tom was momentarily at least in earnest, "that won't answer. It would be murder, and that would

make an end of you as well as of him."

"I don't care," said Tom, gloomily. "I'm only a wreck, anyhow. It makes no difference whether I live or die. She doesn't care for me."

And the tears, all the bravado having suddenly gone out of him, were running down the poor fellow's cheeks.

"Not so bad as that," responded Clinton, gaily, and taking Tom by the hand; for he really sympathized with his manifest sorrow. "Cheer up, for we can't spare you yet. There's a battle to be fought, and you are worth a great many dead men, as you have already proved." And in less than five minutes' time the mercurial fellow's spirits were up to the highest point.

The problem that seemed so difficult, was about to be solved in a way that was then little anticipated.

Before the conversation just referred to was ended, a messenger entered, and, having handed Clinton a note in an envelope, immediately disappeared.

The note, which seemed to be in a woman's handwriting, was as follows:

Clinton Mainland, Esq.:

Be on north side of Fulton Street, between William and Pearl, to-night, at eight o'clock. Follow dark figure, closely veiled, to place of conference. There is injustice to explain and counsel to ask.

YOUR FRIEND.

That was all.

In an instant Clinton had formed his conclusion. The note was from

Margaret Kortright. The "injustice" referred to was involved in her singular conduct toward himself, and the "counsel" to be asked, related to some intimation she had received concerning Gordon Seacrist's misbehavior. Whom could she more properly consult than her old playmate and neighbor, to whom she had once before made application? That she should have asked a night meeting, upon a public street, would have appeared unaccountable had he not once already met her in a more exceptionable place, and the circumstances of the case been such as would preclude either party from publicly visiting the other. A street-meeting, if ever known to others, might appear accidental. At all events his opinion was made up and his resolution formed. He would obey the summons.

Nevertheless, as Tom was present, he handed him the paper, and asked his advice.

"An acquaintance, ugh! Any little *affaire d'amour*?" asked Tom, slyly scrutinizing his companion's face.

"None," answered Clinton, emphatically.

"Then have nothing to do with it," said Tom, most positively. "It's some trick of Tammany, I'll warrant you. Oh, I know all about Tammany. I've gone through Tammany's mill. There's villainy at the bottom of it. No friend ever asks an appointment of that kind."

"Nonsense, Tom!" responded Clinton, good humoredly, well knowing that Tammany was one of Sponge's weaknesses, and not being

inclined to connect Margaret's name with the affair. "Nonsense!" he went on. "What is there to fear? The street selected is one of the most public in the city—the last place in the world for an ambuscade. I'm resolved to see what it means."

"Now, don't, I beg of you," said Tom, rising and laying his hand on Clinton's shoulder with a look of deep concern in his eyes. "I feel that there is mischief intended. You are in certain people's way—more than you think for. They would only be too glad to have you removed. As for the place selected, traps are never set where they are looked for."

"Why, my good friend," said Clinton, still affecting to laugh at Tom's apprehensions, "it was only a minute ago that you wanted to go out and kill somebody on the street. Now you are afraid of you don't know what."

"Yes, on your account," replied Tom. "I'm only a wreck, for whom nobody cares—only Tom Sponge. But you—you are Clinton Maintland. You have a future."

"Well, well," responded Clinton, quietly, but firmly, "my mind's made up. I'm going to see it through."

"Then," said Tom, speaking up quickly and decisively, "let me go in your place. We're about of a height, and I can so disguise myself in your clothes that nobody will know the difference after night. If mischief's intended, they won't hurt me when they discover that they have got the wrong man."

"On one condition," replied Clin-

ton. "That I am to follow within seeing and striking distance; and that we are to be entire strangers for the time being, should your suspicions as to the motive that induced the appointment prove unfounded."

And so it was arranged. Clinton was perfectly willing that Margaret should be somewhat frightened at first, as a punishment for her past unkindness, particularly as Tom's discretion could be entirely relied upon.

Soon after nightfall the friends were on their way to the scene of their expected adventure. Clinton's clothes upon Tom's person did have a somewhat baggy look, but otherwise the disguise was very good. As Tom had insisted upon going armed, he had one of a pair of pocket-pistols which had been the gift of a friend to Clinton, refusing the tender of the other, and compelling Clinton to retain it upon his own person. They were soon at Fulton Street, along which a murky stream of people was pouring towards the great ferry of that name. At the point indicated in the note, nothing suspicious was to be seen, except a close carriage standing by the roadside, with the driver sitting like a statue on his box. Here the friends separated, Tom taking the north sidewalk, while Clinton sauntered along on the opposite side of the way. From William to Pearl marched Tom; but nothing came of it. Back again to the starting-point with the same result. But a third time going over the ground, just after he had passed the carriage, the

door opened, a figure in a dark female robe, and closely veiled, descended, and, slightly touching Tom's arm as it hurried past him, kept rapidly on in the direction of the ferry, while the statuesque driver suddenly arousing, the carriage rolled away and disappeared round the nearest corner.

Tom promptly followed the dark figure, and Clinton, crossing over the street, joined in the pursuit, but keeping a little way in the rear. Into the throng of people about the ferry-house the domino entered, but did not pass through the gate. On one side of the ferry-house was a pier running far out into the river, on the further end of which was a lamp burning, but with the flame turned down so low that its light was scarcely perceptible. Turning aside at the ferry entrance, and passing quickly round the corner of the building, the dark figure hurried out upon the pier. Tom, who had been pressing forward in the hope of getting a glimpse of her features, followed closely behind. Clinton was not so fortunate. A sudden rush of people cut him off, and it was some little time before he could so disengage himself as to follow after. As he entered upon the pier, he was startled by the report of a pistol at the further end, succeeded by a sharp cry and the dull splash of a body in water. Rushing forward, he could discover nothing that gave sign of life or motion. He shouted "Sponge! Sponge!" but there was no answer. At last, however, as his eyes became better accustomed to the dim light, he discovered what

looked like a human body stretched out upon the planks, and he immediately sprang towards it. It was, indeed, a human being, warm, but quivering in the agonies of expiring life. With a cry of "Oh, Tom, Tom, is it you?" he turned it so that the face would come to the light, and, as he did so, started back with speechless horror. The face was not Tom Sponge's, but it was one that was perfectly familiar. In the gleam of the faintly burning lamp falling upon it, Clinton recognized the same malignant, deadly expression which had once glared into his countenance from that of the ruffian Hargate at Barton Seacrist's dinner-party. At a glance he knew that face, which compressed all the fury and hate of a whole vicious life in its last terrible, settled stare. Utterly paralyzed by the spectacle, he stood with a dreamy consciousness that his hands were covered with blood, until he felt himself suddenly seized upon by strong men. Then, under the impression that he was in the hands of murderers, he resisted, and resisted terribly, struggling with almost superhuman exertion; but in vain. The odds against him were too great, and he was soon a helpless prisoner. Then there was a clamor of many voices, a rush of people, the gleaming of policemen's uniforms, and Clinton became conscious that he was the centre of an excited throng—the mark of many curious, and some threatening, eyes. The balance of that night, and many nights and days following, he passed in a cell of the Tombs.

Then did Clinton have an opportu-

nity to learn the value of that laudation which had been so abundantly bestowed upon him in his hour of triumph. Of the many who had hailed him as the coming man, and been so profuse in their friendly professions, not one sufficiently sympathized with him in his trouble, even to inquire after his health—much less to come to his assistance. He was left entirely to himself. With Hargate's memory it was different. The man, when alive, had been universally looked upon as a bad and desperate character; but now, when dead, and there was a chance to hold him up as a political martyr, his virtues, before undiscovered, were lauded almost without measure. Clinton was alone in his prison cell, a universally execrated man, while a grand funeral cortege, with banners, and music, and thousands marching in procession, was doing honor to the dead.

In other respects did Clinton find the world equally unfair. He had before smiled at Gordon Seacrist's attempt to dispossess him of the position to which he had been chosen by the people. He knew that the evidence would all be in his favor, and that a body so respectable and responsible as the assembled law-makers of the great State of which he was a citizen, could decide otherwise than according to the weight of testimony, he never for a moment supposed. Yet, when the Legislature assembled, Gordon was given the place for which Clinton had received five hundred majority, almost without a thought of the facts and rights of the case.

Clinton, indeed, had much not

only to depress him for the present, but to alarm him in view of the future. The case against him was wonderfully strong. He was found standing over the dead and murdered man; there was blood upon his hands; he had desperately resisted the attempt to arrest him; and, most damaging of all, the pistol that had discharged the fatal ball, and which was discovered by the dead man's side, was found to be the mate of one in Clinton's pocket. There was a seeming motive, too, for the alleged criminal act. Hargate was to be one of Gordon Seacrist's principal witnesses in the contested election case; and Scourge's *Sunday Plague*, among many other fictions it published, did not hesitate to declare that the two men had been engaged in angry disputation but a few minutes before the bloody deed had been done. For these convicting circumstances there seemed to be no possible explanation. Even the anonymous note, which had been the cause of all the trouble, was gone, having been in a pocket of Clinton's coat which Tom Sponge was wearing. Tom, alas! nothing had been heard of him since the fatal night. He, whose testimony would have made all clear, had as effectually disappeared as if he had been swallowed up by the great deep—as, indeed, was probably the case.

It was, however, not merely the loss of Tom's evidence that Clinton lamented. The thought that he had, probably, been the means of bringing about the generous fellow's death was the most grievous of all his woes. Gladly would he then have

laid down his own life, could it have availed to restore that one which he doubted not he had been the means of destroying.

Poor Tom! the tide was running out at the time of the fatal visit to the river's side. Had the reader stood on the pier next seaward to the one on which the tragedy was enacted, at the moment of Clinton's arrest, and looked down into the black waters that went heaving and sobbing past, he might have beheld for a moment, by the light of the solitary lamp burning there, a white and ghastly face go drifting by upon the current, and then all would have been dark again.

CHAPTER XVI.

HOW THE PARTY TOOK CARE OF HIM.

THE election over, among the first things which Clinton Maintland felt called upon to do, was to sit down and write a long letter to his father in answer to the one given in a previous chapter, in which his infidelity to his father's political party had been so earnestly disapproved. In his reply Clinton relied for a vindication of his course upon an argument intended to prove that the citizen's obligation was wholly due to his country, and that a party could have no rightful claim upon him when his conscience led him to question the justice of its aims or the integrity of its management. The principle enunciated was simple enough, and could have led to no controversy, if it had been permitted

to stand by itself. But, in its support, the writer proceeded to review, in no very complimentary terms, certain passages in the history of the political organization of which his father was so firm an upholder, and which were certainly amenable to criticism; and somewhat boastfully, in conclusion, referred to the indorsement which his own defection had received from the people in his election to office. He certainly intended no affront, and yet he could have adopted no course better calculated to incense his father's prejudices and offend his pride. From no one could Hugh Maintland so ill endure such an attack upon his most deeply rooted convictions as from his own son. To no one else would he have retorted so sharply. Looking upon Clinton's epistle, not merely as an unwarranted assault upon his party, but as an evidence of abandonment of principle and disregard of parental counsel, he hastily responded in language that was full of bitter and cutting reproach. Scarcely had the letter gone when he regretted his precipitation. A little reflection satisfied him that his son's words did not justify the construction he had given them, and that his party zeal had carried him too far; but Hugh Maintland was not the man either fully to see or quickly to acknowledge his mistake. The mischief had been done.

But another matter had begun to claim Hugh Maintland's attention, about which his mind was by no means easy. Another year's rent for the farm upon which he was living was nearly due, and, after the

course he had pursued in opposing and defeating Colonel Kortright's political aspirations, he could look for no indulgence at his hands ; and, indeed, his pride would not have permitted him to ask for any. As usual, he was behind in his affairs, and a considerable deficit in the amount of the rent remained to be made up. Clinton had before relieved him in such emergencies ; but how was he to appeal to Clinton for pecuniary assistance after the censorious letter he had written him, without an acknowledgment of error on his own part which he was unwilling to make? Help, however, he must have, or he would be turned from his home.

In this dilemma it was but natural that Hugh Maintland's mind should revert to the assurances he had received from his party friends. They had both privately and publicly pledged themselves to "take care of him" in just such a difficulty as he was threatened with. The opportunity to make good their words was now offered. Hugh Maintland was too proud a man either to ask or accept of charity ; but there was more than one way in which the party could relieve him without humiliation on either side. It had valuable patronage to bestow, and no one could deny that he was entitled, both by service and qualification, to its favorable recognition. A case to put its professions to the test was about to arise.

While Hugh Maintland was anxiously considering the situation, an office in the gift of his party, the emoluments of which, could he ob-

tain it, would furnish him all he desired—a comfortable maintenance for his family—suddenly became vacant. No sooner did the fact come to his knowledge, than he resolved to ask his party associates of Willowford to assist him in obtaining the place. A meeting in which they were fully represented, was, accordingly, held at Perry Doubleman's store. Great enthusiasm prevailed. Grupp presided, and Phips was, as usual, far the most busy man on the occasion. Maintland frankly and fully stated the circumstances which led him to ask their support for the vacant position, and the expression was unanimous that he ought to have it. A petition was, accordingly, addressed to the appointing power, and signed by all present, setting forth Maintland's claims with great emphasis, and which Phips volunteered, from his strong interest in the case, and the great affection he had for the candidate, to take to the State capital, that he might present it in person and support it with his powerful advocacy. "If the claims of Willowford are not acknowledged, it will not be my fault," said the earnest little man with tears in his eyes, as he shook Maintland's hand for the dozenth time and was about to set out upon his important mission. Several days of great anxiety to Hugh Maintland, as they were bringing him perilously near to the threatened crisis in his affairs, went by, and then came word that Willowford's "claims" to the coveted position had been acknowledged—by the appointment of Phips.

All hope of official assistance be-

ing thus cut off, there remained to Maintland no alternative but to solicit aid, in the form of a loan, from one of his political friends. To whom should he so readily go for a favor of that kind as to his friend, Grupp? Still it was by no means with an easy heart that he sought that man of ample wealth and made known his want. It was only a small amount he needed to make up the deficiency in the sum that would save him his home—an amount which the rich Amos Grupp could have supplied without so much as feeling the loss.

"You know my rule," said the capitalist, after listening to Maintland's account of his necessity—"Land or two good securities. As you hain't got no land, who's your indorsers?"

"Indorsers!" exclaimed Maintland with a voice of surprise and indignation. "Surely you do not intend to enforce your rule against me—your personal and political friend?"

"And why not?" asked Grupp, with a look of almost equal astonishment. "We are friends and belong to the same party—that's true; but politics is politics, and business is business."

"But you, with others, stand pledged by the most solemn promise," resumed Maintland, striving hard to retain the command over his temper, "to see that I do not suffer the fate with which I am now threatened, on account of my devotion to our party."

"That's all right," answered Grupp with undisturbed composure. "The party's bound, as you say, to take care of you; but that's no reason

why I should do so. Let the party do its duty."

There was no help in that quarter; and, with a heart that was like a stone, Hugh Maintland took his way, almost mechanically, to Perry Doubleman's store, where he expected to find some more of his political friends, intending to ask them for that assistance which had just been denied him; and intending further, should that resource fail, at once to write to Clinton for his mother's sake, and acknowledge his error; for he was beginning to believe that his son, in his views concerning party authority, was right after all.

He was not disappointed in finding several of the most zealous and responsible of his party associates at the accustomed rendezvous; but he could not help noticing the look of estrangement, if not of positive aversion, with which he was regarded as he entered among them. Not one hand was held out in greeting. Always before had his coming been hailed by the parties then present with the liveliest manifestations of pleasure. Nevertheless the urgency of the case was such that he was resolved the seeming coldness of his friends should not deter him from his purpose. Asking their attention, he stated the trouble in which he found himself involved; reminded them of their reiterated promise of assistance; and assured them that, if possibly in his power to prevent it, not one cent of loss should any of them sustain by securing him the trifling sum his necessity then demanded. There was no immediate response from those to whom the ap-

peal was made ; but, withdrawing to themselves, they continued to talk together in low and earnest tones. At last a conclusion appearing to be reached, one of them, assuming to act as spokesman for the rest who stood approvingly at his back, informed Maintland that they pitied him very much indeed ; that the amount of money he required was a trifle about which they cared nothing ; but that for their own reputations, they could not possibly consent to have any business or other connection with a man whose son was about to be hanged.

“Hanged?” exclaimed Maintland, in a tone that sent the whole crew of them back several steps. “Hanged?—what do you mean?”

What! was it possible that he had not heard the news—the terrible news about which everybody else was excited and talking?

No, he had heard nothing.

Then there was put into Hugh Maintland’s hand his favorite party journal—the one from which he had been accustomed to read with so much satisfaction to his edified political sympathizers—containing an account, introduced with startling head-lines, and in a vein of scarcely disguised exultation over the downfall of a prominent political adversary, of the dreadful tragedy in which Clinton Maintland was made to appear in the light of a deliberate and red-handed assassin.

Hugh Maintland dropped the paper, when he had finished reading the exaggerated and heartless record of the horrible affair, as he would a

serpent, and, turning upon his heel, walked slowly from the room.

Maintland made no further effort to escape the calamity with which he was threatened. He, indeed, had enough besides to think of. His son was in prison, charged with the crime of murder, and his wife, never strong, was so utterly prostrated by the blow that her life was for a time in danger, and her situation fully engrossed her husband’s time and attention. Pay-day came, and the rent was unsatisfied. Then, as had been anticipated by the delinquent renter, followed the notice to leave, and, soon afterward the constable, appearing, began to transfer the few effects of which the debtor could not be deprived by law, from what had been Maintland’s cottage—now his, alas, no longer—to the public highway. His sick wife, still unable to rise from her bed, was placed in the shade of a tree growing by the roadside ; and not far off was piled the furniture and other articles of which the house had been stripped.

Hugh Maintland acted like one who was indifferent to the whole proceeding. He took no part in the work of removal, and paid no attention to the disposition that was made of the relics of his property. Standing in the highway, outside the grounds which he no longer had a right to enter, with his hands folded across his breast, he continued to gaze upon the cottage in which he had been born, and which had supplied him the only home he had ever known—or then knew. To the few curious individuals who had gath-

ered about he spoke not a word, and no one seemed disposed to intrude upon his meditations. All regarded him with looks that expressed more of aversion than of sympathy, as though the shame, as well as the disaster, that had come upon his house, was properly chargeable to its natural head. The man was for the time as much of an outcast from his neighbors' hearts as from the home in which he had dwelt. Indeed, very few of his neighbors were to be seen. Neither Grupp, nor Phips, nor any other one of his late partisan friends, who had been so zealous to declare their readiness to take care of him, was present.

At last there was a little stir, and the spectators, with looks expressive of great deference, stepped aside to make way for a tall and somewhat elderly man who came riding up on a spirited horse. Colonel Kortright, for he it was, having dismounted and handed the bridle to some one who tendered his services to hold the animal, walked directly up to his late tenant.

"Moving, I see," he remarked, in a tone that was full of quiet sarcasm.

"Yes, sir—moving," was the reply, in a voice that manifested not the least feeling.

"You now see, Hugh Maintland," Kortright went on, with not a little triumph in his look and manner, "what your foolish opposition to your old neighbor has brought you to. It is all your own doing."

"I did my duty, sir," was the calm response.

"Well, if you think so, so be it.

That is your concern—not mine," said the Colonel, haughtily, clearly somewhat nettled by the other's coolness. "I am not here to reproach you; but to tender you any present assistance you may be in need of."

"Thank you! Thank you, neighbor Kortright!" rejoined Maintland, in the same deliberate tone; but with just a little fire gleaming in his eye. "You are very good; but I could not think of taxing your generosity any further, after the kindness you have shown to me and mine in turning us from the farm."

"Farm," responded Kortright, with a sneer that showed how Maintland's words had pricked him. "I should like to know what business you have with a farm? Raising potatoes and corn is quite beneath the occupation of a gentleman so employed with the affairs of his country. You have given your time to the public, and now the public is likely to reward you—in the Poor-House."

"It was my right," replied Maintland bitterly.

"Right—oh, yes—undoubtedly your right," went on Colonel Kortright, with increased offensiveness. "So it was the right of that son of yours to go off to New York to live a gentleman; and now, if justice is done him, he is likely to end his vagabond career on the gallows."

Hugh Maintland, up to this point, had never changed his position, nor to any considerable extent the expression of his countenance. But now, in an instant, the whole man was transformed. Dropping his hands from his breast, and confront-

ing his late landlord with a visage all aglow with passion, he hurled his words, each one emphasized with out-stretched finger, right into his face.

"My boy may have in some things erred; but whoever says that he is guilty of murder—lies!"

Colonel Kortright was a man, not merely of undoubted courage, but of hasty temper. His honor was a point upon which he had always been most tender. Without pausing to consider the source from which it came, he immediately resented the insult with a blow.

The blow reached its mark, leaving a bright red spot on Hugh Maintland's brown cheek; but it might as well have been a breath of air. The man was not even staggered by it. But the effect upon his spirit was instantaneous. Gathering his whole strength in the effort, he sprang directly at his assailant's throat. Kortright went down before him like a reed before a tiger. Then there was a struggle, and a gurgling, choking noise upon the ground; and then the by-standers, recovering from the stupefaction into which they were thrown by the suddenness of the affair, rushed forward and dragged the two men apart, with difficulty breaking Maintland's desperate grip.

There was no further violence. Kortright was so stunned as to be unable to rise; but, being lifted to his feet, he soon recovered sufficiently to be able, with the assistance that was abundantly tendered, to take his seat in the saddle.

As for Maintland, folding his arms

and saying not a word, he stood apart, apparently the least excited man in the crowd. No one spoke to him. The constable, indeed, did approach with a view to arresting him for assault; but Kortright, who was by this time in the saddle, seeing the movement, sternly interfered.

"Not at all," said he. "I was the one in fault."

And with these words, turning his horse's head about, Kortright rode slowly away.

But the affair did not end there. The next day it was reported that Colonel Kortright was ill. The excitement of the scene just described had been too much for his strength. Still no alarm was felt. But the sick man grew worse; fever set in; and finally reason gave way. In his last painful hours he was back at Hugh Maintland's cottage, living over the events that had so grievously affected him. Once more was he exercising the landlord's right of turning the delinquent tenant out of doors. Then he was taunting him with his obstinate adherence to his party's cause; and then, imagining himself the victim of assault, with outstretched, quivering hands, and terror-stricken countenance, he would shout, "Keep him back! Keep him back! He will kill me! He will kill me!"—and, with these piteous words upon his lips, the breath went out. Hugh Maintland was terribly avenged.

Scarcely had the landlord ridden from the ground, leaving his late tenant shelterless upon the highway, when a most unique caravan was

seen approaching. First came an old-fashioned family carriage ; then a jaunty market-cart ; and then a heavy farmer's wagon. As the queer procession drew near, the sharp features of Polly Brown were seen in the foremost vehicle, she having been left in charge at home, as the reader already knows, by Martin Swartwout, who had hurried off to New York at Clinton Maintland's summons. Soon the shrill voice of that energetic woman was heard giving orders that no one presumed to dispute. Hugh Maintland stood to one side like a person from whom all hope and energy had departed, or moved about like one whose powers were merely mechanical. But, under Polly's direction, everything was satisfactorily adjusted. The sick woman being comfortably fixed in the old carriage, and the household furniture and other effects of the evicted family being safely loaded upon the other vehicles, the caravan was got in motion, and moved slowly out of Willowford.

CHAPTER XVII.

IN PRISON.

THE anonymous note, which had proved such a successful decoy, was still a mystery. But Clinton, always decided in his opinions while they lasted, believed that he understood both its origin and its purpose. He had adopted Tom Sponge's hypothesis with even more than Tom Sponge's positiveness. It was clearly the work of some one in the Sea-

crist interest ; and if so, could Barton Seacrist and his daughter have been in ignorance of the plot, either as to its conception or its execution ? He had ere this learned enough of Kate's share in the machinations for which her father obtained credit with the public, to suspect her of the gravest capabilities. His heart had, indeed, wonderfully turned from its recent idolatry. He now marvelled that he should ever have been the vassal of one whom he had come to look upon merely as a deep and dangerous schemer. Brooding over his wrongs as he lay in prison, the victim of false and cruel accusation, his recent triumph turned to defeat, and his very life put in danger by a hidden enemy, whose impress he believed he saw, all his love was turned to bitterest hate. So firmly had the conviction of the Seacrist's agency in his misfortune fastened itself upon his mind, that all suspicions of Margaret Kortright's connection with it had departed. Of her whom it was no longer in his power to snatch from a threatened calamity even greater than his own, he thought only in kindness and pity. Every trace of vindictiveness towards her was gone. Strangely enough there had entered his mind a vague and dreamy feeling that he was not forgotten by her, and that she would yet come to him in kindness. His judgment told him that the thought was folly, and yet in his enforced idleness it was pleasant to dwell upon, and he indulged the fancy. His mind was thus one day employed as one of the prison attendants suddenly turned the key in the

door of his cell, and shouted in his ear :

"A 'oman wants ter see yer."

Springing to his feet Clinton, in a moment, was ready to obey the summons.

"The bracelets if yer please, when yer leaves this 'ere crib."

It was with a sudden sinking of the heart that Clinton held out his hands to receive the manacles, at the thought of his degradation in the eyes of his visitor, who might be Margaret. The feeling was but momentary, and with a firm step, although with a heart beating somewhat faster than was its wont, he followed his conductor to the apartment in which prisoners were allowed to be seen by their friends.

Sitting on a low bench was a female figure, a thick veil completely concealing her face, that hastily arose as he entered the room. For nearly a minute the parties stood face to face, one of them undecided as to who his associate was. Then the veil was swept aside, and Clinton started back in something almost like terror as he met the keen and unexpected glance of Kate Seacrist.

A moment passed before a word was spoken, and in that moment Clinton had so far regained his self-possession as to be fully nerved for the interview.

"Mr. Maintland, I wish to save you."

This was spoken not without a slight tremulousness of voice that testified to the truthfulness of the words. Clinton's reply, however, was, surprisingly firm—even repellent.

"If I am guilty, I ought not to be saved."

"But you are not guilty—I know you are not guilty," instantly replied Kate, without seeming to notice, if in truth she did notice, the opposition that was in his speech.

"And why should you wish to save me?"

Before Kate replied to this question she walked up to Clinton, and, putting her hands upon the chain by which his hands were bound together, as if to unite her fate to his, looked him sharply in the face.

"Because I love you."

Then, as if her resolution were well nigh exhausted in that one brief declaration, she hurried on with wild impetuosity : "Oh, Clinton, Clinton, is it possible that you can misunderstand me? Surely my presence here—in prison—with you—should speak for me—plead with me. You cannot, oh, I know, you cannot doubt my heart! I gave you up once because you would not serve my father's ends. I found, however, that my love for you was stronger than a father's word. Again I surrendered you when I found that you were resolved to oppose the things upon which my heart was set—for which I had labored long and earnestly. Now I have found that my love is even stronger than my ambition. I am now ready to give up everything for it. I make no conditions. I only ask you to let me save you—for I know who are against you, and how their plans may be circumvented—and that then—then everything may be between us as it once was."

There could be no doubt of the sincerity of the speaker's words, however selfish the motive that inspired them. Her auditor did not question their truth, and the look of painful indecision that momentarily possessed his features—not unobserved by his companion—showed how profoundly he was affected by them. The struggle was but brief. The wavering look settled into an expression of stern inflexibility.

"It cannot be, Kate—Miss Seacrist. I have ceased to love you."

"I do not ask you to love me," said Kate, with startling energy. "I ask you to pity me. Listen, Clinton Maintland—for you shall know everything. I am to-day the affianced bride of—of Abel Cummager. Ah! I see you start. To save my father from defeat and ruin I promised to marry that man. It was a promise obtained by base compulsion. Nevertheless I intended, when it was made, compulsory, invalid as it was, faithfully to keep it. I intended to do so until—until you were brought here. Then I resolved to try to save you and myself—both—you from death—from dishonor—myself from something worse than death. Oh, Clinton, Clinton, shall it not be so? On my knees I ask it."

And, still retaining her grasp upon the chain, Kate sank upon her knees before Clinton, the great crystal drops coursing down her cheeks, and her eyes looking up most pleadingly into his. Clinton was affected—most deeply affected. He trembled through all his limbs. Had he permitted himself then to have met the look

that was fixed upon him, he must have yielded. He, however, turned aside his face. He even closed his eyes to exclude the dangerous vision. With a struggle he prepared himself to speak.

"Rise, Miss Seacrist—rise," he said, quietly and sorrowfully. "I cannot consent to purchase happiness for you—safety for myself, on such terms."

"What!" exclaimed Kate, suddenly springing to her feet, her eyes fairly flashing malignant fire, "do you—dare you, Clinton Maintland, refuse, defy me now? Remember it is the second time I have offered you my love. It shall be the last. I have humbled myself as woman never before did—and is it to be for this? Remember, I can save you—save both life and honor—or I can leave you to your fate. You may not realize it, but your case is desperate. Men have conspired against you who are merciless. You have no other hope of escape. Consider again, Clinton Maintland, before it is too late."

Kate, while she was speaking, had moved to the door of the room and placed her hand upon it, ready to give the signal for it to be opened from without. And there they stood—Clinton erect, self-possessed and resolute, his manacled hands before him, helpless, and yet so strong; for Kate's last words had thoroughly aroused him to resistance; and she, all tremulous with mingled passion and excitement. For a moment or two they silently looked into each other's eyes, and then Clinton spoke:

"I have considered, Miss Seacrist—fully, finally. I shall trust my fate to Heaven. Farewell!"

And with that he turned his back.

The signal was given; the great iron door swung open; but, before taking her departure, Kate Seacrist stepped up to Clinton and hissed in his ear:

"Farewell, Clinton Maintland—and forever."

Passing out of the room, and out of the building, Kate hurried along one of the inferior streets surrounding the great prison, so closely veiled as seemingly to defy recognition, on her way to the point where her carriage was awaiting her; for she had no desire to have the public know that she had visited the Tombs. She had not proceeded far when she became aware that she was followed by some one. She, in consequence, hurried her steps, but in vain. Just as she had reached one of the worst parts of one of the worst streets, her pursuer overtook and addressed her:

"A word with you, Miss, if you please."

Kate, glancing at the speaker, and seeing a shabbily-dressed and haggardly-appearing man, took from her pocket a silver coin, and extended it towards him. Instead of accepting the money, the stranger stepped directly before her and looked steadily into her face. Kate, for she could for the time do nothing else, returned his gaze; and, as she did so, she gave a start, the coin dropped from her extended hand, and she trembled all over with visible agitation.

"You remember me, I see," said the man with a taunting, horrid laugh, "remember Robert Hazen, your old lover—the man you were to have married and whose heart you broke—just out of prison, and right glad to meet you once more. How are you, to be sure?"

Here the man gave vent to another coarse, mocking laugh.

"Stop, my dear," he added, stretching out his arm to intercept her, as she attempted to slip by him. "Stop! a word before you go. You have just come from the Tombs. A nice place, isn't it? Spent a good deal of my time there since we separated. How do you like it, to be sure? Stop, not so fast.

"A word of business before you go," Hazen added, after again intercepting Kate. "You've got a friend in the Tombs. He's in there for murder. He didn't kill the man, and I know——"

"Police! police!" shouted Kate to a watchman who at this moment turned a corner near at hand. The officer quickly responded to her call; but, as she undertook to point out the man who had molested her, he was not to be seen. Hazen had disappeared.

CHAPTER XVIII.

ANOTHER WOMAN.

"ANOTHER 'oman wants ter see yer."

Margaret Kortright had been confined to her room by serious illness during all the time the events last

related were transpiring. But although unable to see and converse with Clinton Maintland, as had been her desire at the time she was prostrated, he was by no means out of her thoughts. Indeed, while alone in her chamber, with nothing to disturb her meditations, she thought of him very often, and with a frame of mind that was very far from satisfactory. She was afraid she had done him injustice. Especially since his gallant behavior on the night of the banner-presentation, had she distrusted her former judgment of his conduct and character. Was a man who could do as brave and disinterested an act as she had reason to thank him for, capable of the baseness of which she had supposed him guilty? was a question she could not help asking. The more she reflected upon the matter, the more her heart softened towards the friend of her childhood. Not that she was in love with Clinton Maintland, or suspected herself of being in any danger of such a thing. She was engaged to be married to another man—a man of whom, as she felt it her duty to be, she was very fond. And, besides, could there be any harm in thinking a good deal and kindly about a person whom she was afraid she had treated badly, and who was an old acquaintance and companion?

When the great trouble came upon Clinton, Margaret heard of it, of course, and was very much shocked. She was even surprised to find how much she was shocked by the intelligence. Clara Bafford, who was duly advised by Gordon Seacrist, kept her fully enlightened as to all

the details of the horrible affair. "It's only what I expected," said that positive young lady, "of one who could so abuse that sweet, dear creature you were so good to," referring to her former "beggar and impostor," Alice Plain.

But was he guilty? That was the question which, although she said nothing upon the subject, was uppermost in Margaret's mind. She did not believe he was—at least she was not going to believe he was until she had made some inquiry on her own account. She had done him injustice herself—she now felt quite certain she had—by a hasty decision, and might not others do the same thing?

"Where is Clara?" Margaret one day asked, after she had so far convalesced as to be able to ride out a little for exercise. Clara was out—had gone a-shopping. Margaret might have known as much; for Clara had that morning told her that such was her purpose. Had the family carriage gone with her? It had. Then would some one order a hack? She wanted the air; and, besides, she had a purchase to make. The hack came, and was directed to drive to a down town store. Stopping long enough to make some inconsiderable purchase, Margaret once more entered the carriage.

"Where now, Miss?" asked the driver.

"To the Tombs."

"The prison?" inquired Jehu, in astonishment.

"Yes, the prison."

Margaret evidently meant just what she said, and she was, accordingly, driven to the point indicated.

"Anything, Miss, for anybody inside?"

Nothing. Margaret would go in herself, and the carriage should wait for her; and Jehu was once more astonished.

But the undertaking was not as easy as she had thought. A chill came over her, and she almost turned and fled in terror from the spot, when she found herself within that dark and melancholy structure which has so much in its history and associations to justify its name. But, mustering all her courage, she succeeded in making known her wish at the proper office, and was duly shown to the reception room.

"Maintland's in luck to-day," remarked an official in charge to one of his chums, when Margaret had left the prison office. "That last 'un's not the common sort neither, I tell ye. D'ye see how she trimbled?"

Margaret did, indeed, "trimble," as the officer expressed it, in spite of herself. Everything about her operated with strange terror upon her nerves. The atmosphere of the place, pungent and sickening, oppressed her; the dark, heavy walls and the grated windows were sadly suggestive; and every now and then the sound of a key turning in its lock, or the crashing to of some great iron door, sent a shiver through her frame. Gladly did she sink down upon a bench in the room to which she was shown, and with wildly fluttering heart she there awaited the coming of the man who had so deeply interested her.

But a still greater shock was in store for her. She had not without some hesitation ventured upon the step she had taken, in view of the alienation that had existed between herself and the person she expected to see. How should she explain her visit? To meet the difficulty she had arranged a neat little address of condolence for Clinton, to be delivered when they met. To her mind he was the same person she had before seen—strong, tall, and reliant. But when, her attention being suddenly aroused in the midst of her meditations, she looked up and saw before her the man she had known, with great irons upon his hands, and his countenance pale with confinement, so changed and serious, she utterly forgot her studied words and burst into tears.

Clinton was the first to speak—the first to turn consoler.

"You do not seem well, Miss Kortright. I am afraid this place has overcome you."

"I have been ill, sir—very ill—ever since the time you were so—so kind to me," with difficulty replied Margaret through her tears.

"Then you did not send me a note a short time since?—asked for no interview?"

"I sent you no note—asked for no interview," answered Margaret, with no little amazement in her eyes.

The door for explanation was open, and so well was the opportunity improved that when, nearly an hour afterwards, an elderly gentleman called and asked the privilege of seeing Clinton Maintland, and was ac-

cordingly conducted to the visitors' room, he held up his hands in astonishment at seeing that young gentleman and an elegantly attired female conversing together upon seemingly the very best understanding.

"Don't pity yer a bit, Clint, if that's the sort a company yer has in this here place," said Martin Swartwout to his nephew, after Margaret Kortright was gone.

But Margaret was to meet another party whom she had not for a long time seen, as was shown by the fact that when she reached home she was accompanied by Alice Plain. To Clara Bafford's inquiry, What she had again picked up "that beggar" for? she replied that she needed her services in preparing for her wedding, there was so much fine sewing to be done.

"Oh, she better than an Italian boy, I admit," replied the vivacious young lady as she went skipping away, and who was soon employed in a very entertaining conversation with Gordon Seacrist in the parlor below, Margaret being too much fatigued with her "shopping" to appear.

Under the protection, and much of her time in the company of her new employer, quiet, reticent, and seemingly not altogether unhappy, her fingers never wearying, and the busy needle speeding on and on from morning to night, did Alice remain, making ready the garment in which another woman was to be married to her own husband.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE WEDDING.

THE wedding, originally intended to follow immediately after the election, had of necessity been postponed on account of Margaret's illness. But as she was rapidly convalescing, it was now arranged that it should precede the meeting of the Legislature a sufficient time for Gordon Seacrist to enter, without interruption, upon the serious duties his place in that honorable body would impose upon him. True, he had not been chosen to the position, and another man, by virtue of a majority of five hundred votes, held the credential to the place; but that circumstance gave Gordon very little uneasiness. The other man was in prison, charged with the highest grade of felony, and, besides, due precautions, in the nature of proper pre-arrangements with the men who were to be judges in the case, had been taken to ensure a satisfactory result. On all these points Margaret was kept duly advised, as the steps that from time to time were taken in the matter reflected the very highest credit upon the sagacity of her future husband. There was another ground for expedition in the business. News of the death of Margaret's father had been received; and, while the intelligence was not of a nature to add to the gayeties of a wedding occasion, it imposed upon Margaret a responsibility as the inheritor of a large property, which she needed the assistance of a husband properly to meet. Gordon, on

being advised of the additional liability that would come with a wife, showed no hesitation whatever in accepting the trust. On the contrary, he displayed a most commendable readiness to enter upon the financial charge.

Accordingly, the preparations for the grand event were pushed forward with all becoming dispatch. A change in the programme originally marked out was rendered necessary by the occurrences just referred to. A grand wedding, with receptions and other customary festivities, had been in contemplation; but now the whole plan of procedure was changed. Margaret insisted that the affair should be conducted as quietly and unostentatiously as possible, and Gordon, willing to expedite matters to the utmost, gracefully yielded his acquiescence.

There was a little church on a quiet street—very far from fashionable either in location or attendance, for both were of the poorer sort—with the pastor of which Margaret, in some of her charitable operations, had become intimate; and there it was, and by her friend, the clergyman in charge, she insisted the ceremony should be performed, with only a few personal friends as witnesses. Gordon assented at once. But there was another party to whom the arrangement was wholly unacceptable. Clara Bafford, according to the original design, was to have been Margaret's first bride's-maid, and to her the change of programme was a most serious disappointment. Most vigorously did she enter her protest, declaring that she saw no

use in getting married at all, if there was to be no excitement about it. She quite lost her temper with her cousin, and her spirits at the same time. She grew sullen and discontented; fretted over the most inconsiderable annoyances; avoided Margaret's society, and on more than one occasion was found by the latter in tears—all owing to her disappointment, as she said, about the wedding. Still there was no modification in Margaret's resolution—hard hearted as such a course might appear. At the same time, however, it must be urged in extenuation of her seeming callousness, that she was, probably, not fully aware of her cousin's suffering, as Clara wept much in private; and then she had so much to think about on her own account. So busy was she with her preparations that she even sometimes excused herself to Gordon, leaving to Clara the duty of entertaining him when he called—a duty which the latter never failed satisfactorily to perform, great as her affliction was.

Margaret, indeed, was very closely employed. She had a great deal of shopping to do; and, as Clara no longer accompanied her, she had always to go alone. She went no more near the Tombs; but scarcely a day passed that she did not—by accident, of course—meet Martin Swartwout, and, as they were from the same section of country, they invariably had a long and confidential talk. Besides all this, Margaret had Alice Plain and her work to look after. It had been arranged that she was to be married in travel-

ling costume. Indeed, the programme was that the newly-married couple were to proceed directly from the church to the depot on their way to Willowford to look after Margaret's financial affairs. Accordingly, Margaret and Alice spent a great deal of their time together, the latter employed upon the suit—a very plain and modest one—in which the former was to become a bride. And not to be an exception in such cases, Margaret herself seemed to have a very large share of her mind—if not of her heart—fixed upon her wedding outfit.

Patiently and faithfully did Alice labor at her task, her delicate fingers noiselessly and with matchless skill constructing those wonders of feminine handicraft which are so indispensable on such occasions, adding, as they do, so largely to the strength and beauty of the marriage relation. Although an occasional sigh did escape her, she seemed by no means discontented either with her work or her companionship. Once only did she give way to the emotion, which, under such circumstances, could hardly be expected to be entirely absent from her heart. It was when the wedding-suit was finished, and she and Margaret being discovered to be about of a height, the latter requested the former to put it on, that she might study the effect. Alice obeyed; but, when duly accoutred in the marriage-robe, instead of standing like a manikin to exhibit the consequential garment, she suddenly burst into tears and threw herself into her companion's arms.

The day in due time arrived. A

small party had gathered at the parsonage connected with the church where the marriage was to take place. On the part of the groom were his father, his sister Kate, and two or three very particular friends; while on Margaret's side were only her uncle and aunt Bafford—the attendance being thus limited at the bride's particular request. Clara was at home, and in bed—down with an agonizing headache, the result of much weeping; although she could hardly have told whether it was for disappointment about the wedding, or in view of the loss of her cousin's society. Indeed her eyes had hardly been dry for several days.

Margaret was yet far from strong, and, upon the party's arrival at the parsonage, was forced by a sudden faintness to retire to a private room, the remainder of the company passing away the time in conversation as best they could. So long a time elapsed, however, that the others were beginning to grow impatient, when, the door opening, the expected one, with a veil thrown over her face, entered somewhat hastily, and, taking Gordon's arm, the entire party at once proceeded to the church. There the regular clergyman was already at his place before the altar, and beside him, or rather, a little in the background, stood another person, an entire stranger to all present; but as he was, probably, some friend of the pastor—a brother, most likely, in the church—his presence and position excited no surprise.

Notwithstanding the day outside

was clear and brilliant, the body of the church was full of a solemn gloom, with the exception of a narrow strip of light before the altar, which came from a half open window through which the sun was shining. Into this the parties about to be united were compelled to pass, and, standing there in the clear, strong sunlight, the bride-to-be having pushed aside her veil, all their features were fully and sharply revealed.

Everything seemed to be in readiness, and yet the ceremony did not proceed. The friends had all taken their places; the silence of expectancy was upon the assembly; but the clergyman did not open his lips. The unknown man was the only one employed, his eyes being intently busy with the countenances of the wedding couple before him. The delay was becoming irksome; the guests were beginning to look inquiringly into each other's eyes; and a frown had gathered upon Gordon's brow; when the awkward silence was suddenly broken by the stranger who, in a deep-toned voice, began as if speaking to himself:

"The same; there is no doubt of it whatever."

This singular remark necessarily created some commotion; and, as the female by his side began to tremble violently, Gordon turned to whisper an assuring word in her ear, when he started back with a face that was ashen with surprise and terror.

"Great God!" he exclaimed, "it is Alice Plain."

It was even so. The person whom Gordon Seacrist had been supporting upon his arm was his wife already, the betrayed and deserted Alice Plain; and the unknown individual, whose unexpected observation and unaccountable proceeding had appeared so unmeaning, was no other than the clergyman who, having married Gordon and Alice, had assured Tom Sponge that he should know them again, if similarly dressed and occupying the same attitude, they should once more stand before him.

The scene instantly became one of intense confusion. Gordon burst forth into maledictions upon all who had been parties to the deception practiced upon him, and Alice sank down helplessly upon the floor. The only person present who was not greatly disturbed, was Barton Seacrist, who at once entered upon an inquiry into the facts of the case, resulting in a pretty full exposure of the history already familiar to the reader.

"It is vain for you to make denial," he finally said, turning to Gordon, who persisted in disputing some of the facts that were brought out. "You have been a bad, disobedient boy; and the only wonder is that you were not sooner entrapped. It is cause for congratulation that you have escaped a crime that would have brought additional disgrace upon yourself and your family."

Then turning to those about him, the old man continued:

"It is fortunate that none are present whose discretion cannot be trust-

ed. For the sake of myself and daughter I shall expect the public to know nothing of this."

"And you, madam, who appear to be my legal daughter-in-law," he went on, turning sharply to Alice, "I shall expect to see elsewhere, when it suits your convenience, and we will see what can be done for you."

"And now, Kate," he remarked, in conclusion, turning to his daughter, who, with true sisterly affection, had thrown her arms about her brother's neck, "let us be gone. We have no further business here." And, taking the weeping girl upon his arm, he quietly left the room.

As for Margaret—still Margaret Kortright—she was already on her journey towards Willowford.

CHAPTER XX.

THE TRIAL.

CLINTON, although a prisoner in a prisoner's cell, and wholly abandoned by the noisy throng of admirers who had gathered round him in his day of supposed prosperity, was not altogether without companionship. Besides the two visits that have already been described, he was favored with much of the society of his uncle, Martin Swartwout, who, having safely reached the great city, lost no time in so conciliating the prison officials as to gain admission to his nephew almost at pleasure, and his presence was always most grateful. It was not merely that the great-hearted man seemed to bring with him, in his genial ways and ever

cheerful temper, a portion of the sunshine that was without the prison walls, but he proved to be a most valuable helper. He had employed counsel for the defence, insisting upon having the most able advocate at the bar and taking upon himself the whole burden of the expense. But he had, in addition, set about an investigation of the case on his own account, and in his own way, with results that proved him to be far from an indifferent detective. That he might frequently examine the scene of the alleged murder, as he said, he had taken lodging down near the river's side, although the location was anything but attractive. If there was any other inducement that had taken him there, or kept him there, he kept the fact closely to himself. He had, by Clinton's request, hunted up Alice Plain, and spoke well of the modesty and good sense of that unfortunate female, the next time he saw his nephew. To his meetings and conversations with Margaret Kortright he made no allusion whatever.

On all points he was not so reserved. He regularly read Clinton his letters from Polly Brown, which indeed, were largely taken up with Clinton's case. That good woman had much to try her in the position in which she was placed, and her epistles had generally a desponding tone. Her apprehension on Clinton's account was great, and her troubles with the farm and with Hugh Maintland's affairs were most irritating; but she never failed to enumerate among her afflictions the

lonesomeness she experienced on account of her employer's absence. Not that she wanted him to come back until he had got "the boy" out of trouble, but oh, the establishment at home did so miss its rightful head!

"Polly's got a peppery tongue and a temper," the old man would say, when one of her letters was concluded, "and many's the quarrels we've had; but, I tell you, there might be worse weemen than Polly Brown, and worse wives, too, than she'd make, provided the man that got her knowed how to keep her in tow."

"Why don't you marry her, uncle?"

"Oh, we differ enough as it is, without gittin any nigher together!"

"I'm sure you seem to have a very high opinion of each other, with all your little disagreements."

"That's true," Martin Swartwout would reply, "but I guess we'd better lit well enough alone. Gittin married's like comin to New York to make your fortin—a very doubtful experiment at best;" and then the old man would go off into a quiet chuckle over his own joke.

But, notwithstanding the brave countenance Martin Swartwout managed to keep up in his nephew's presence, undaunted by his recollection of Polly Brown's peppery tongue, he did long to return to his own quiet home; and it was impossible for him wholly to avoid an occasional reference to the wished-for time when he and Clinton would be going back there together.

"But you forget, uncle," Clinton

one day responded, "that it is uncertain whether I shall ever again see my old home. It is no longer with me a question of will, but of power. I may be hanged."

"Are you not innocent?"

"Yes."

"Well, they won't hang an innocent man, will they? And besides, Postgrave, the lawyer I've employed, seems to be a mighty smart chap. I told him to charge whatever he pleased, provided he'd clear you, and I'd pay."

"Postgrave is a very able man, and will do all that can be done. But, uncle, you do not seem to understand the desperate character of the people who are against me."

"Are they not such as you chose to associate yourself with?"

"Yes; but I did not know them then."

"Rather you did not know yourself. All greenhorns think they are sharper than the sharpest until they are learnt better."

"I accept your correction, uncle," replied Clinton, with a dreary attempt to smile. "But, oh!" he continued, with a sober enough face, "if we only had Tom Sponge now, how easily we could defeat their machinations! Poor, poor Tom!"

"Why, by all accounts, Tom was a silly enough sort of fellow," responded Swartwout to this lamentation, "just sharp enough to seize a-hold of your coat-tail, and hang on."

"Tom had his weaknesses," rejoined Clinton, "but I tell you, uncle, that if ever there was a brave, generous soul, it was Tom Sponge's.

Weak as he was, he had penetration enough to foresee the danger which threatened me, while I had not. Unable to dissuade me from rushing into the trap, he asked to take my place, and incur the risk which my folly invited, and I—I was blind enough to let him do so. If there ever was true friendship shown, it was there. Oh, uncle, I do feel that I am a murderer! My punishment is deserved. Although innocent of the blood of which I am accused, I fear that I have to answer for the life of my poor, generous friend."

"Now don't go on that way, Clint—don't, or you'll have me a-blubberin' yit. I tell you, you will."

And the old man, notwithstanding his protest against being moved to tears, was rubbing his eyes in a most suspicious manner, even as he spoke.

Poor, poor Tom Sponge! Notwithstanding all Clinton's anxiety on his account, not the slightest trace could he get of him, dead or alive. There was the sorest spot in his heart. It was not merely a selfish desire on Clinton's part to secure an important witness, although Tom's evidence seemed indispensable to his escape. So far from such being the fact, could he have been assured of Tom's safety on the condition of his own continued punishment, he would cheerfully have borne confinement and handcuffs—nay, he would have almost welcomed the highest penalty with which he was threatened as the price to be paid.

After several vexatious postponements—the contested election case

having, meanwhile, been satisfactorily decided in Gordon Seacrist's favor—Clinton's trial came on. Its approach was duly announced by Scourge, in the *Sunday Plague*, in an article not merely giving the darkest interpretation to the facts of the case for the defence, but solemnly descanting upon the number of criminals who were escaping punishment, and the necessity that existed for stricter enforcement of the law.

But the public press was not the only power that was against the prisoner. The crowd of lookers-on that filled the court-room was largely made up of the former associates and admirers of the deceased Hargate—a coarse, villainous throng, in no way reserved or delicate in the expression of their antipathies—so that all the outside influence tended to a conviction. Of Clinton's previous flatterers, not one was to be seen.

In due time a jury that was competent—not by reason of its knowledge, but of its ignorance, of the facts of the case—was obtained, and the trial began.

The opening address of the District Attorney, who, although a man rather under middle years, and by no means devoid of social qualities, was, on account of his assumed severity as a public prosecutor, facetiously known as "Old Grip," was a most effective presentation of the case against the accused. In order to show the criminal intent—the malice or *animus* alleged to exist—much stress was laid upon the fact that the prisoner and the deceased belonged to different political par-

ties ; and, by reason of the contested election case, pending at the time of the asserted murder, in which one was a principal and the other an important witness, might be said to be not only political, but personal enemies. Here was the beginning of the deadly motive, and on this foundation the uncontroverted circumstances of the case—the finding of the prisoner standing over the deceased, his bloody hands, the pistol in close proximity, and his resistance to the attempted arrest—were so skillfully built up as to seem to constitute a position that was impregnable.

The District Attorney did not conceal his personal commiseration for the defendant, in touching words confessing his regret that duty compelled him to act as his prosecutor ; but skillfully followed up this acknowledgment with a highly wrought picture of the effect upon society, should one whose hands were red with murder escape the consequences of his crime—a picture so vividly drawn that, at its conclusion, the whole audience, the majority of whose members belonged to the criminal class, gave way to a virtuous burst of applause.

Much of the evidence for the prosecution embraced uncontested facts, and was soon gone over, eliciting but little controversy. But it was not all of that character. To make the case even stronger than it was, some of the witnesses undertook to establish certain points which would have been most damaging for the defence had they been true, and which were plausible enough, if permitted

to pass without critical scrutinization. But Postgrave, Clinton's lawyer, was not the man to be deceived by the most crafty misstatement. He seemed instinctively to scent the lie, and never failed by some ingenious turn to bring it to light. In this he was by no means unopposed. The District Attorney, jealous of his rival's professional success, and naturally desirous of protecting his witnesses, interposed all possible obstacles, and the battle between the lawyers waxed hot. At first the utmost courtesy was observed ; but, by degrees, the restraints of professional decorum were overstepped, and warm words passed to and fro between the brothers of the Bar.

"May it please your Honor," began Postgrave, speaking in a tone of quiet, but most telling irony, in reply to an objection that had been made to one of his questions by the other side, "the distinguished and honorable District Attorney must know that he mistakes the rule. His long experience in dealing with crimes—with which no man is more familiar—and the laws governing them, ought to have taught him—"

"It has taught me," exclaimed the District Attorney, more excitable than his adversary, as with flushed face he sprang to his feet, "to despise both the insinuations of the counsel for the defence, and the ignorance of law he displays."

"Gentlemen, gentlemen, such language shall not be permitted in this court!" sternly interposed the judge ; and, by his direction, the case proceeded, only to be interrupted in a short time by another out-

break between the lawyers, of such a bitterly personal character as to lead the spectators to believe they would never speak to each other on friendly terms again.

The result of all this was that, while none of the essential facts against Clinton had been shaken, such a cloud of doubt and suspicion had been thrown over the case that, upon the conclusion of the evidence for the prosecution, which concluded the day's proceedings, Postgrave was in capital spirits.

"We have certainly done enough," he said enthusiastically, "to raise a reasonable doubt of guilt in the minds of the jurors, and that ought to acquit. I have hope of the result."

But Clinton took a very different view of the subject. He was not satisfied to escape through a legal technicality. He knew he was not guilty, and he had all along cherished a lingering confidence that something would transpire in the course of the trial to demonstrate his innocence. But now, as the evidence was virtually concluded, that hope was extinguished, and with it all the value he set upon life seemed to have faded from his mind.

But there was even then one consolation. An unlooked-for brightness had momentarily flashed across the gloom of his wretched situation, leaving a sweet and soothing memory behind it. The court had adjourned for the day. The crowd of spectators was slowly dispersing, and the officers of the law were about to lead Clinton back to his cell, when, forcing her way through the throng,

a female suddenly approached him, seized his manacled hands in hers, whispered a word or two in his ear, and then disappeared as quickly as she had come. No one had clearly seen her face, for her veil was so worn as to obscure her features; but Clinton was in no doubt as to who his visitor was. He needed no sight of her countenance to tell him that the voice he had heard and the hand he had felt were those of Margaret Kortright; and most acute were both the joy and the agony that came with that knowledge—joy to know that Margaret, of all persons, did not believe him guilty, and agony to realize that all hope of the happiness which such an act of condescension, under other circumstances, would have brought with it, was now a vain delusion. Through all the long night that followed, he was the victim of the most opposite emotions. Forgetting for a little while the terrible reality of his situation, his thoughts carried him back to the time when yet a boy, sitting by Margaret's side, he had poured his dream of youthful ambition into her ear, and thence, gliding along the current of the swelling years, his imagination pictured to him the bliss that might have been with that dream in all of its fullness realized; and then—then the fearful truth would rush in upon him; the great prison walls would rise up before his eyes, and the horrible possibilities that were just beyond, and the torture of his soul, as Heaven thus faded into the realms of the Lost, was inexpressible.

But while Clinton in his gloomy

cell was thus racked with the most excruciating fancies, other parties to his case were almost as busily employed—how, so far as two of them were concerned, we will now show. Postgrave, as the night wore on, was alone in his private office, a most comfortable, if not luxurious, apartment—for, being a bachelor, it was his sitting-room as well. With his books about him, he was busy solving some knotty point of law in the pending case, when the door opened, and “Old Grip,” the District Attorney, stood looking in.

“Halloo! is it you?” exclaimed Postgrave, as he discovered who his visitor was. “Come in, take a seat, and make yourself at home”—an invitation which the public prosecutor failed not to accept; and the two men, who but a few hours before were so pitted against each other that the lookers-on supposed they would never meet except to engage in deadly quarrel, were soon conversing together in the most friendly and agreeable manner. They talked freely, too, about the trial in which they were employed, and hearty were the laughs suggested by its various incidents.

“That reply of yours this afternoon,” said Postgrave with an amiable grin upon his countenance, “the indignation you displayed when I intimated that you had not exactly told the truth, was equal to anything of Forrest’s. It was sublime—regular thunder.”

“And do you know, old fellow,” rejoined the people’s advocate with an equally genial expression, “that I thought some of your insinuations

that we were resorting to sharp practice—not doing exactly the fair thing, and so forth—were exceedingly well done. They were monstrously sly, and I could see that they had a big effect on the jury, although of course, the judge understood them. The hypocrisy of the thing was really splendid.”

But the District Attorney had called on business, he said. He had a proposition confidentially to submit. It concerned Clinton’s case. He knew the defendant, had had him for a professional opponent on several occasions, admired his ability and manliness, and, he declared, it went sorely against the grain to try to hang him; although the speaker had never conducted a more brilliant and effective prosecution.

Feeling much real sympathy for Clinton, and seeing no other probable mode of escape, the District Attorney’s proposition was, that Clinton should, before the trial progressed any further, plead guilty to an inferior grade of crime, and, he thought there would be no difficulty in having the plea accepted by the court—in fact he felt authorized to say as much—and a comparatively light penalty imposed—say two or three years in the penitentiary, which would satisfy public opinion. But, if the case went on, and a conviction of murder took place, which was exceedingly probable, it would then, he said, be impossible to do anything for him.

“That’s a matter about which I must consult my client,” said Postgrave, “and I will let you know the result in the morning. For my part,

I think your proposition, as the case now stands, a very liberal one."

"Very well," replied the District Attorney, rising, "I must go."

"Hold on a minute," rejoined Postgrave. "I've got a matter on which I want your professional opinion. It's something under seal."

With that the department's proprietor proceeded to a closet, and took from it a long, black bottle, which was closed with a seal. This having been broken, and some of the contents of the bottle poured into a glass, Postgrave extended the beverage to his companion with a request for his opinion upon it. The latter, testing the article, declared that it was "a true bill," and "would hold water."

"What a pity," the speaker went on with mock solemnity, "that your liquor's so much better than your law."

"My law," rejoined the solemn Postgrave, who could weep over the most abandoned of wretches, provided he was well feed for it, "is so good that it has saved the life of many a fellow creature."

"Oh, I know it's got a deal to answer for," responded the official. "Many's the man it's turned loose on society that ought to have gone to the gallows."

"And how much worse is that, pray, than trying to hang a poor fellow for doing society a real service in ridding it of such a creature as Hargate?" And Postgrave smiled complacently in view of the hit he had made.

"I admit the service," responded the public prosecutor, "and your

point would be an excellent one, were it not for the fact that I am here now for the express purpose of trying to save the man who did it from hanging. I offer to open the door, and point the way, and then, if he doesn't go, it's not my fault if I do hang him. That's business, you know."

"Oh, yes, that's business, I'm aware," answered Postgrave, drily. "And, by the way, did you ever hear that song of mine on that very subject? I wrote it while listening, or rather, pretending to listen, to one of your speeches intended to convict one of my innocent clients of murder, or something about as bad."

"And in reply to which, I've no doubt, you shed a bushel of tears, when you knew the fellow deserved a dozen convictions. However, let us have the song. I always believed the world lost a magnificent artist—in the burnt-cork line—when you decided to turn lawyer."

"Well, fill up your glass, for that's absolutely necessary to the due appreciation of my music."

And Postgrave, having moistened his own throat, began :

SONG.

It's all in the way of business, you know ;
You know.

The wrong is made right ; the black is
made white ;

The high is replaced by the low.

Is there one to complain of such practice ?
how vain !

It's all in the way of business, you know.

It's all in the way of business, you know ;
You know.

What is yours I make mine—you may
grumble and whine—

If the law of the land wills it so ;
For who cares a pin for so trifling a sin ?
It's all in the way of business, you know.

It's all in the way of business, you know ;
You know.

For that makes it right to say a thing's
white,

When its shade is the hue of the crow.
Because it's a lie, would you cavil ? Oh, fie !
It's all in the way of business, you know,

It's all in the way of business, you know ;
You know.

Though the means be a trick that's worthy
Old Nick,

Just come from the regions below,
In the end we may see the *jus civile*.
It's all in the way of business, you know.

It's all in the way of business, you know ;
You know.

Then here's to the brim, in homage of him
Who *per se* has the verdict to show.
All authorities say that his cause is O. K.
It's all in the way of business, you know.

"Bravo ! bravo !" shouted the District Attorney, at the conclusion of the song, in the closing refrain of which he had participated. "That's capital, on my word. You're a poet made, not born, as true as I'm the people's representative."

The potations in which the people's representative had been indulging, had by this time somewhat disturbed the equilibrium of his ideas, and rendered his compliments of a more than ordinarily doubtful character.

"If it wasn't court time," he rattled on, "I'd like to stay and make a night of it with you. You're a jolly old Gravestone—you are. I like your singing ; and I like your conversation ; and I like your liquor better than either. But the fact is, I'm in a murder trial, and the man's

got to be hung—that is—that is—provided—oh, blast it, you know what I mean better than I do."

And, after a little more similar incoherence, he succeeded in making his way out of the room, leaving Postgrave to his solitary meditations.

The following morning Postgrave made his way to the prison to confer with Clinton on the subject of the District Attorney's proposition. He found Martin Swartwout already with his nephew, so that he became a party to the conference that followed. "I feel it to be my duty," said Postgrave to Clinton, after he had stated the proposal with which he was charged, "to give you my candid opinion on the case as it stands. We have certainly shaken the opposition terribly—terribly ; but still, upon the evidence now presented, I am forced to admit the probability of a conviction—provided the overture which comes from the other side is rejected. Nevertheless, it is for you to decide what is to be done about it."

"What is to be done about it," responded Clinton, instantly and with undisguised indignation. "Reject it, of course. To plead guilty at all, is a confession of crime. I tell you I am innocent—wholly innocent. If I am to be convicted of anything, I want to be hung. I don't want to live after it."

"That's the talk," exclaimed Swartwout, who had been intently watching his nephew's countenance during the foregoing conversation. "That's the talk of an innocent man. Oh, nobody need now say yer guilty.

Stick to it, Clint. Stick to it, Clint. We'll beat 'em yit. We'll beat 'em yit."

And with that the old man, from dancing about his nephew with uncontrollable joy, threw his arms about his neck, and closed with a most ardent embrace.

"And what says your man?" asked the District Attorney of Postgrave, in a whisper, as they met in the court-room.

"Neck or nothing."

"Then I'll have to hang him—if I can—that's all."

The defence opened in a very quiet way. Postgrave addressed a few earnest words to the jury; but, contrary to expectation, made no appeal on account of his client's youth and previous character. Then, handing up the names of a few citizens who had known Clinton, he asked them to be called as witnesses.

The District Attorney seeing, as he thought, a chance for a strategic advantage, and now ready to avail himself of all the tactics of his profession, at once arose, and remarked that, if the object was to establish character, the evidence was wholly unnecessary, as he was prepared to admit that the reputation of the defendant, previous to the offence with which he was charged, was unimpeachable. And with that the public prosecutor took his seat, directing at his adversary a glance of conscious triumph, satisfied that he had taken away from the other side pretty much all its capital in the display of a number of respectable witnesses, while he had admitted nothing

which it would not otherwise have had.

Whatever may have been Postgrave's real feeling in the matter, he was too old and wary a practitioner to exhibit anything like disappointment. On the contrary, he courteously thanked the District Attorney for his liberality, and, without a moment's hesitation, accepted his proposition.

"We will now proceed to another branch of the defence," he remarked. "I would ask for the calling of Thomas Sponge."

At the mention of that name Clinton gave a start, and it was as much as Martin Swartwout on one side, and Postgrave on the other, could do to hold him in his seat, as the shadow of a man, with scarcely enough resemblance to the original Tom Sponge to prove his identity, rising up from an obscure point in the rear of the room, came tottering forward towards the witness-stand. It was clear enough that he had gone through some terrible experience. Without once glancing towards the prisoner and his former employer, Tom took the chair that was provided for him, kissed the book, and calmly awaited the examination to begin. After the usual preliminary questions, came the inquiry:

"What do you know of the killing of the deceased, Dennis Hargate?"

"I shot him with Clinton Maintland's pistol," answered Tom, without so much as the quiver of a muscle.

Then, amid the almost breathless attention of the whole assembly, he proceeded to tell the whole story ; how Clinton was bewitched by the anonymous note ; how they went down to the ferry in pursuit of the veiled figure ; how, following the decoy out upon the pier, he had suddenly found himself surrounded by threatening men, and, recognizing Hargate as the leader, had drawn his pistol and fired ; how, struck down by a heavy blow, he soon found himself struggling in the water ; how unconsciousness came on, and he knew nothing more until he found himself lying upon the floor of a miserable, underground den—the clothes he was wearing all spoiled, he added, with a pathos quite characteristic—and discovered that a rough, fierce-looking man, who, he afterwards learned, having, on some predatory intent, been hiding under the pier in his boat, had rescued and brought him ashore, and then ; under the impression that he was dead, was quietly going through his pockets ; and how, fever setting in, he knew nothing more until he awoke to find himself in the same wretched room, but in the care of Martin Swartwout, to whose nursing he owed his life and his ability that day to save the life of one who ——”

But at this point, Tom incautiously glancing towards Clinton Maintland, the eyes of the two men met, and, simultaneously springing to their feet, with a cry of joy they rushed into each other's arms.

Tom was in no condition that day to give further testimony. His

strength was already overtaxed, and it was necessary to have him at once borne from the room and to a quiet place.

“Robert Hazen will take the stand,” said Postgrave in his firm, professional tone, when the excitement attending the incident just related, had subsided ; and a coarsely-dressed and somewhat haggard man, rising up in the midst of the spectators, walked quietly towards the witness-stand. At a glance Clinton recognized that face, and the thought rushed in upon him that the man whose life he had once saved, was there that day to help save his. Casting one assuring and grateful look at Clinton, Hazen calmly took his place and awaited the examination to begin.

“Stop one moment,” said the District Attorney, to whom, in the meanwhile, several notes had been mysteriously delivered ; for the events just related had produced no little commotion in the court-room. “May I ask you what you expect to prove by this witness?” turning to Postgrave.

“This witness,” answered Postgrave, “is the person who, being under the pier at the time of the assault and killing, not only saved the life of the last witness who testified, but saw and recognized the men who were associated with the deceased in the attack upon him.”

“May it please the court,” said the District Attorney, who had, meanwhile, kept his feet, “as I understand my official duty, it is to prosecute supposed criminals—not innocent men. As soon as I become

persuaded that a party accused of crime is blameless, I am no longer justified in laboring for his conviction. That point has clearly been reached in this case. The defendant is most amply vindicated. It, therefore, affords me the highest gratification, not merely to announce that I can no longer consistently prosecute this case against him, but to ask in his behalf a verdict of acquittal."

With the conclusion of these words the speaker cast a glance of peculiar meaning at the opposing counsel.

"Gentlemen of the jury," said the judge, "you have heard the remarks of the people's representative, with the justice of which I fully agree. You will, therefore, consult together, and return your verdict."

Without even speaking to each other, the twelve men in the jury-box rose up and, with one voice, announced a verdict of "Not Guilty."

All this was like a dream to Clinton. Since the wonderful turn in his case, he was scarcely conscious of what was going on. The words "Not Guilty," sounded in his ears, but he scarcely realized their joyful sinification. It was not until he became aware that Martin Swartwout, with a voice only half audible for his sobs, was begging his forgiveness for having concealed so much, "for fear something might go wrong;" and that the tears were running down Postgrave's sober cheeks; and that friends who had long been absent, but who had now suddenly and mysteriously reappeared, were pressing about him to grasp his hand; and that the crowd of lookers-on,

who had before been regarding him with unfriendly eyes, were now shouting and cheering in a perfect frenzy of joy over his deliverance, that he became thoroughly alive to the fact that he was once more a free man. Even then he received the congratulations that were showered upon him with a languor amounting almost to indifference. He seemed to be looking about him for something that was not visible, until, a messenger approaching and speaking something in his ear, he started for the door, forcing his way through the surging crowd with such rapidity and energy that Martin Swartwout with difficulty could keep up, and soon was in the street. There a carriage was in waiting, and in it was to be seen the radiant, but tearful, face of Margaret Kortright. No sooner had Clinton and his uncle entered it, than the little party it contained was rapidly whirled away.

Great was the popularity Clinton once more enjoyed. Compliments and honors from all sides were poured in upon him, the ovation finally culminating in the tender of a public dinner to be given by his many friends and admirers. The offer was declined; partly because Clinton had tasted to his satisfaction the cup of popular flattery, and knew how uncertain was its flavor; and partly because of another engagement.

A few days after the events just recorded, there was a little party gathered at the church to which the reader was taken in the chapter immediately preceding. Once more the clergyman took his place at the

altar; but this time there was no interruption to the joyful ceremony. The young people united in the holy bonds were in travelling dress, and, proceeding thence, were soon on their way to the scenes of their earliest hopes and dreams in Willowford.

CHAPTER XXI.

CONCLUSION.

WITH the events that have been narrated, closes that chain of circumstances which bound the fortunes of the parties with whom the reader has been made familiar in a connected story. Thenceforward their lives were to run mostly in separate channels, and it only remains to trace them far enough to satisfy a natural curiosity.

By the incidents that have been described, Barton Seacrist, within the field of his political operations, was left in undisputed mastery of the situation. No one any longer pretended to question his power. All the legislation he required was granted without a murmur; his schemes for personal and political aggrandizement were ratified with scarcely a show of opposition; his friends—and few from that time but claimed to be his friends—were put in all positions of authority; and the station to which he had so long been aspiring—the Chief Magistracy of the great city of which he was a resident—was at last seemingly safe within his reach. The election that was to lift him to it was near at hand, and all arrange-

ments to make success absolutely certain, had been adopted with his accustomed foresight and accuracy.

Once more, as a preliminary to the coming contest, a dinner was given, at which nearly all his old supporters, with whom the reader has become acquainted, were present. Windsham soared and crackled as usual; Alderman Skipp talked horse with uncommon felicity; Senator Bloom sang a new song to the latest minstrel accompaniment, and, as the air was that of "Love among the roses," it gave Windsham one of his best opportunities to pun on the singer's name; Grulls drank liquor of his own supplying, and in no illiberal quantity; Scourge, of the *Sunday Plague*, was made happy by the privilege of indulging a few ill-natured remarks of so general a character that nobody took offence; Abel' Cummager, who had Kate Seacrist for his companion, glowered upon everybody with his habitual taciturnity and watchfulness, although no longer an object of distrust, because the Mohicans, as a political organization, had been disbanded; Gordon Seacrist responded to a toast in honor of the Senate and Assembly of the State, in which he had something to say about the necessity for a free and uncorrupted ballot; the men of padding padded themselves as they had done many a time before; Browbeat and Striker both made speeches, which were chiefly compliments to each other—but the grand event was when Barton Seacrist, having been toasted as the next Mayor of New York, and duly panegyricized by

Windsham in one of his most brilliant efforts, disclaimed all personal ambition and urged his desire to return to the shades of private life in such touching terms that the whole Assembly was dissolved in tears—presenting a scene of which the public had the benefit in the next morning's papers.

The next day Barton Seacrist did not appear at the usual hour. In this there was nothing to occasion surprise ; but Kate, with a daughter's solicitude, nevertheless visited his bedside, and anxiously inquired after his health. Here was nothing the matter ; he was simply exhausted—but, as time went by and he grew no stronger, Kate became alarmed. The family physician was sent for, and, upon that authority appearing, he gravely shook his head. There was not much the matter, it was true. There was no disease. But the man was worn out. The machinery of his system had at last broken down under continual overwork. His physical vitality was gone. He did not have the bodily strength to rally.

Barton Seacrist was quick to read the language of distrust in his attendant's eyes. He demanded to know at once the worst. It was frankly given. The doctor did not believe he would ever be up again.

"Not be up again?" exclaimed the old leader with a shrill, terrible voice, as, with the lingering remnant of his once great nervous strength, he raised himself up in bed and looked the physician in the face out of his deep, clear eyes with an expression in which

indignation, fear and pleading were all combined.

"Not be up again, doctor? I tell you I must be up. The election's just at hand, and they'll cheat me, if I'm not up to watch them. They're scoundrels, hypocrites, liars, every one of them. They wish I was dead—dead that they might get my power. O doctor, I must be up! Everything—everything's now at stake—all I have labored, and plotted, and lived for. And now it's mine—mine—mine, if I'm only up. Doctor, doctor, you must not let me die now. Don't let me die now. I'll give you half—yes all—all—all——"

The voice had died away to a hollow whisper, and then it ceased altogether; and the white, helpless old man, his lips still faintly moving, fell back utterly undone upon his pillow.

He never rose up again. Delirium set in, and he began to talk wildly in his intervals of dreamy consciousness. He thought he was in the midst of a close and terribly exciting election. Once more he was rallying his friends about him, and directing their movements against the common enemy. "Don't be afraid! don't be afraid!" he would say, encouragingly. "The day will yet be ours—never fear. The Mohicans will come to our help." And then he would swoon away, only to rally again and again ; but still that terrible election was undecided. Fiercer and closer grew the contest, and wilder became the sick man's agitation, growing at last to a perfect frenzy as he discovered that fiends—not men—made up

the opposition. "They are devils— devils— devils," he would shout. "See, they are gathering all about us. Look how black their wings are. Oh, they will have the polls! they will have the polls!" Then he would call upon his friends and followers, piteously exhorting them to stand by him. "We must drive them back! Oh, we must drive them back! To work, men—every one of you to work! Now's the time; now's the time. Let them howl; let them howl. We must have the day—we must—must—must—"

At last the contest seemed to be over, and the old man was listening to the returns as they came in from the different parts of the field. His eye kindled with its old fire, and he would feebly clap his hands together, laughing with a thin and quavering exultation, as the reports confirmed his most sanguine expectations. All was going well, and higher, higher rose the thrill of his mad, tremulous ecstasy, when suddenly there came a change. His features stiffened, and his hands trembled and clutched, and his whole expression became fierce and wild, and oh, so desperate, as, with almost superhuman power, after seeming for a moment to be intently listening to something, he exclaimed, "Five hundred majority? Five hundred majority for him, did you say? It cannot—it cannot—oh, it is!—it is! Horror! Madness! We are beaten—beaten—beaten."

The wail of a spirit lost could not have been more terrible than the last, piteous cry that went out from lips that were already cold and white as marble. The great Sachem who,

in the field of his fame and triumphs, had found no equal, at last beaten—beaten by Death.

His political friends and followers—the men who had shared his patronage and his power—gathering together, passed a cold and formal resolution of respect for his memory, and regret for his loss; and then, in the wrangle and scramble for the authority that had been his, forgot that such a man had ever lived.

How the inheritor of the dead Sachem's name and fortune, his son Gordon, has since lived and prospered, is best shown by a conversation to which he was not long ago a party; he, in the meanwhile, having, through the judgment of an accommodating court, obtained a divorce, on the ground of desertion by her, from his quondam wife, Alice Plain. His companion, on the occasion referred to, was a bright young girl.

"Now, Gordon, you are perfectly certain that you have no other wife? It would be so awful to have somebody turn up unexpectedly to dispute one's right."

"No, Clara, darling, I never was married but once, and then I didn't mean to be."

"But you do mean it now?"

"My soul's jewel, I cannot possibly live without you."

"Oh, dear! what shall I do? I don't want you to die; but I do so wish that father knew something about it. It doesn't seem right at all."

"It's no use, Clara. Your father told me never to darken his door again when—when I came so near being entrapped by that designing

c of yours. When you're my wife, however, he'll knock under—never fear."

Gordon was right. The paternal Bafford did "knock under," when he found that his daughter was really Mrs. Seacrist; and so far the felicity of the wedded pair has been undisturbed by the visage of any rival claimant.

As for Gordon's earlier wife, she was by no means inconsolable upon being informed of his second marriage; as she had already promised to become Mrs. Tom Sponge.

But there was still another wedding to be recorded. When Martin Swartwout got home from the city, he was so rejoiced at meeting his old housekeeper that he just took her in his arms and deliberately kissed her then and there; and Polly never said one word in opposition. An occurrence so unprecedented was not to go for nothing. The Rev. Mr. Goodbody was soon sent for, and the two were made one.

As for the second Mrs. Abel Cum-mager, *née* Kate Seacrist, no lady in New York rides in a finer carriage, nor is said to be more liberal in the use of *vinaigre de rouge*.

Tom Sponge remained for a short time in New York after Clinton, who found that the charge of his wife's ample possessions in Willowford required his presence there—and, indeed, he had no desire to return to the city—had left it; but he soon declared that he could not possibly

reconcile himself to live in any community governed by Tammany Hall. So Clinton kindly secured him a situation in his own neighborhood, and how well he is prospering there, is shown by the fact that no one is so celebrated for the brilliancy of his neck-ties in all the country round.

As for Hugh Maintland, he is back on the old farm, for which he now holds an unencumbered title. In some respects, however, he is a greatly altered man. He now rarely talks politics, holding that there may be good men as well as bad men, in all parties; and that it is not at all necessary for any man to be a patriot, that he should be a partisan. He does sometimes visit the store of Perry Doubleman, who is still postmaster of Willowford, and as much of a trimmer as ever, but he is no longer a member of the political firm of Grupp, Phips & Co.

Clinton Maintland, since his return to the scenes of his boyhood, has been either too closely employed in the management of his own private business, or too much engrossed with the mingled pleasures and cares of a growing family, to take an active part in public affairs. So high is the estimate, however, in which he is held by his neighbors and fellow-citizens, that he has recently been chosen to represent his district in the legislature of the State—this time by far more than

W. S. M.
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